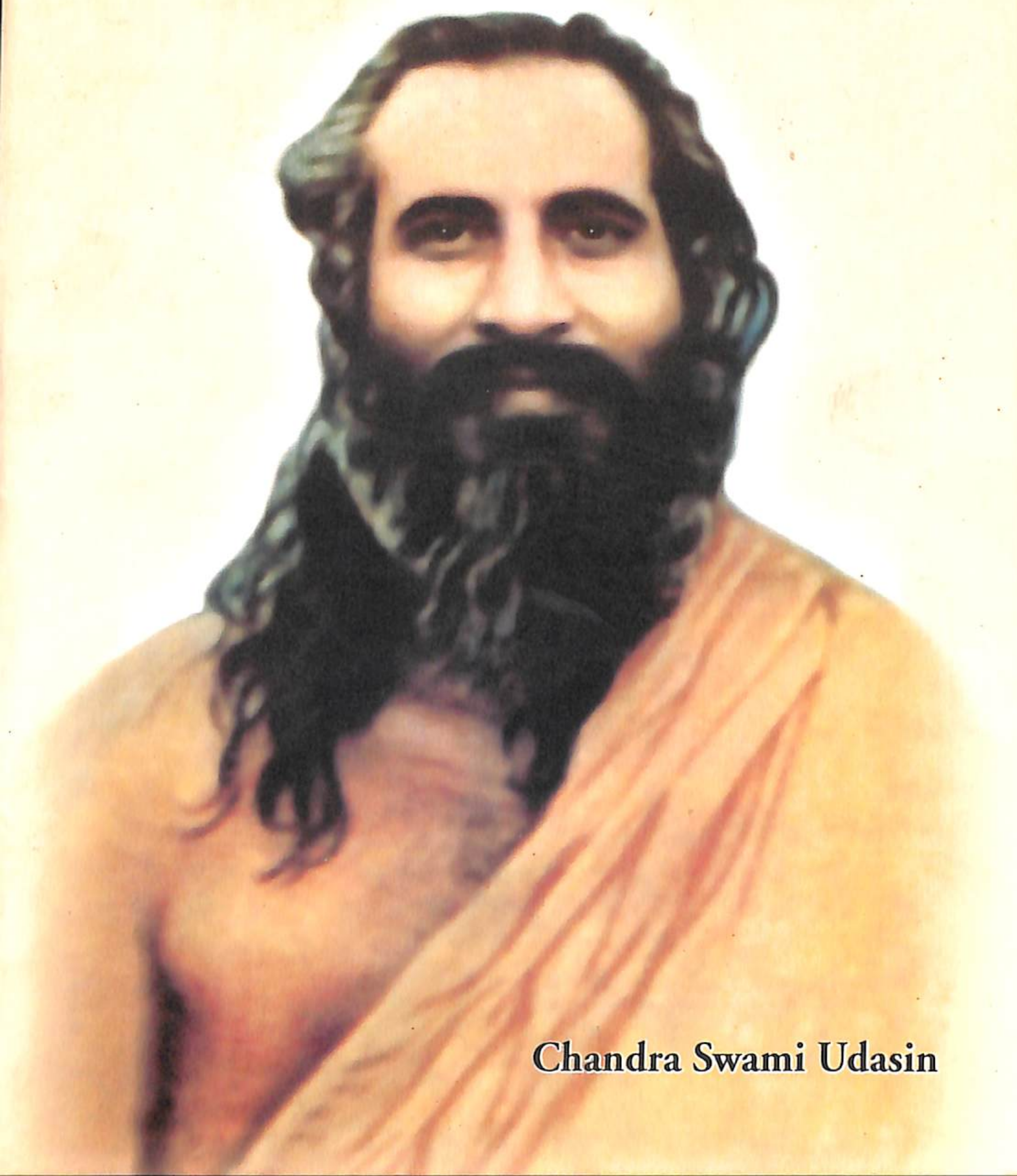
The Practical Approach to Divinity



Chandra Swami Udasin



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Dedicated to

the sweet and loving memory of

Udāsīnāchārya Shrīchandra Bhagavān

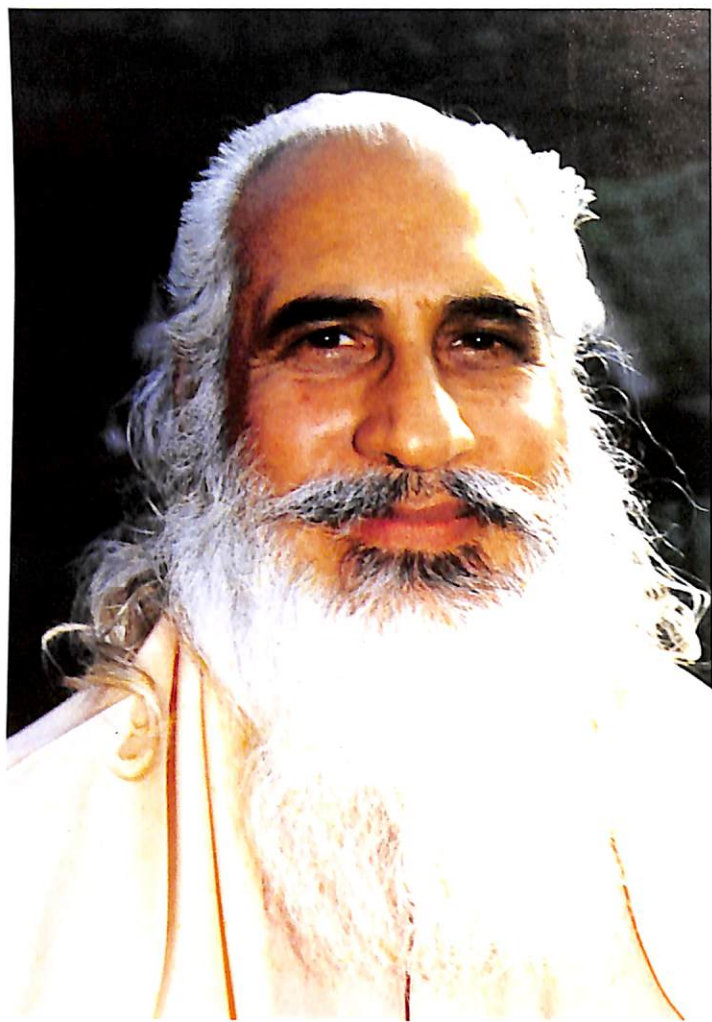
and Balayati Bābā Bhūman Shāha Udāsīn



Udāsīnāchārya Bhagavān Shrīchandraji
(1494 - 1643)



Bābā Bhūman Shāhaji Udāsīn
(1687 - 1747)



Shri Chandra Swamiji Udasin

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The Practical Approach to Divinity

Foreword

Nearly a decade ago, I walked slowly up a hill towards a solitary, small tent pitched on the top under the shade of an old mulberry tree. The sun was about to set; there was a shower of golden hues on the majestic mountains surrounding the beautiful Kashmir valley. The mid-summer verdure of fields and forests, pastures and plains, rivers and lakes presented a bewitching prospect on every side. Just opposite the hill, at a distance of only a few furlongs, a lotus-lake reflected the charm of the evening as it began to bloom amidst a feast of colours. There was a stillness and silence which seemed to calm the most restless of all things, the mind of man. As I reached the spot, I found a few young men sitting quietly in a semicircle facing a vacant *āsana* which lay at the foot of the tree. Except for the rustling of the mulberry leaves and twigs, there was no sound or movement. Even the sheep which dotted the right and the left sides of the hill made no motion. I joined the silent, small company and without even knowing it, in a few minutes the silence and stillness of the scene enveloped me. After a while, I

became conscious of a gentle stir inside the tent. Soon the flap was lifted and a graceful figure wearing the robe of a *sannyāsī* walked forth and occupied the *āsana.* All of us got up and bowed to him. As he sat there, he seemed to me like a steady and gentle flame of peace and inward happiness. His eyes reflected the repose of his mind. That was Chandra Swami. I fell in love with him at the very first sight.

My visits to the saint increased; these became frequent and, after only a short time, I became a regular visitor. As evening followed evening, I discovered an inexplicable charm and extraordinariness about Chandra Swami. He unfolded himself to me petal by petal. Evening after evening Chandra Swami talked about many things, about God and renunciation, purity of mind, Self-Realization, saints and *sannyāsīs.* I had read of these things before, and even heard many spiritualists speak on these topics, but I had never felt as much interested in them as I felt when this young *sādhu* spoke. He made very difficult things easy, and he spoke in a simple way. He spoke beautifully and convincingly and frankly; he spoke from experience. That was the secret of his charm. Prior to him, among so many, I had been deeply moved by only one saint — Swami Laxma Joo, known at home and abroad as Ishvarasvarūpa, the glorious Shaiva saint of Kashmir in the line of the great masters, Abinovgupta and Uptpala.

Under the mulberry tree, Chandra Swami continued to give discourses regularly. The number of listeners and devotees went on increasing. He came to be looked upon as Bhagavān Vyāsa reborn for the benefit of the erring generation of the *kaliyuga*. Whoever listened to him once never failed to turn up again. His frankness and openness, his love and affection, and the sincerity of his devotion impressed everyone. Even the non-believers in God, on seeing him, and on hearing him, began to have second thoughts on their attitude towards life. It would be interesting to recall how a discourse started. It never started in any formal, academic or ceremonial way. It started from nothing; it developed from insignificant talk on trivial matters of day-to-day life, a spark lit a fire, a scratch let loose a river at its source. The swami talked and talked till the evening deepened into night, and the stars and the moon too joined the audience.

Those of us who have had the good fortune of coming into contact with the sage will never forget him. He is the breath of our being; he is the life of our life. As I write these words and bow to him in love and reverence, I am the dust of his feet.

The present volume is the story of a dedicated pilgrim on the path divine. The reader cannot but feel assured of the truth of the story. It is this rare quality of the veracity of experience that distinguishes the book

from the generality of books written on the great inexhaustible and inexplicable spiritual theme. It would almost be an exercise in futility to define God and His ways in terms of logic. Argumentation and intellectualism can never help us to understand the un-understandable. Human understanding, however powerful, is limited and, as such, it cannot measure That which has no limit. With every new development of space-age science, we are convinced of the limitlessness of the Creator's powers and the limitation of man's effort. Man is more than man now, say an angel or god performing miracles, but alas, he is more and more unconscious of the vastness and immensity, and even mystery of a Power controlling the strings. As he moves higher and higher into space, he will only say of himself, "Look at the petty done and the undone vast." The enlightened ones of all ages and countries have shown that one can comprehend the otherwise inexplicable source of creation if one supplements reason with faith and love, if one gives up argumentation and performs the experiment, if "one roasts one's heart with the fire of love," as the great Kashmiri woman *yogī* of the 14th century AD, Laleshvarī, would put it. This book describes that experiment and, hence, its spontaneity, simplicity and appeal. When we have read it once, we would surely like to read it again. That makes a book powerful even as a piece of literature.

This pilgrim's story would not be as interesting as it is, were it not essentially a story of deep and sincere love. The beloved is God. Non-existent, invisible, unreal, fictitious you may say, but for the lover He is real, visible everywhere, lovable and charming. His love has made him a stranger to every other object in the world. He has surrendered himself to Him unreservedly and he has set out on the rare venture of becoming one with Him. Even the atheists cannot but feel deeply touched by the sincerity of the writer's views. Some chapters are bound to instil even the ideas which need to be pursued for their newness, if for nothing else.

The book is valuable because it heightens our awareness of the spiritual view of life. The restlessness of the modern world justifies the need of such a view but more importantly, modern science in the present hour of its big leap forward is showing an unmistakable tendency of rejecting total dependence on sense perception; the emphasis on the finiteness of the objective world is weakening. The atom is in the process of dissolution and if our pursuit continues, we may someday feel the movement of a mysterious hand. A great purposelessness seems to be there in the universe, balls moving in unmeasurable spaces, and towards what end? Call it purposelessness in the language of today's advanced thought or call it "the

free will of the Lord," as the sages of the Himalayas have termed it in their writings. Once we choose to think along these lines, the wisdom of spiritual philosophy becomes apparent. That wisdom is present in this book. It is, as a matter of fact, a digest of the great *shāstras*, the *Upaniṣhads*, the *Vedas* and the *Gītā*. After reading it, you feel that you have gleaned a rich harvest of spiritual thought, that you have heard the great sages and saints, and devotees of God. Chandra Swami awakens us to the greatest responsibility we have — that of knowing ourselves. Once the first rays of this birth of a new thought are visible, the great questions of God, and soul, and life begin to disturb us, and we are set thinking. The first chapters of this book provide valuable guidance towards such thinking, and then we see the footprints which the great lovable sage has left on the path. Let us follow them.

At the feet of the master!

Srinagar
May 1969

T.N. Bhan
Senior Professor of English
Sri Partap Govt. College
Srinagar (J & K)

Introduction

Pujya Gurudeva wrote this magnum opus on spirituality around 1963 at the persistent request of some of his devotees, when he was living on the forested island called *jhāḍi* near Sapta Sarovara, Haridwar. As a matter of fact, this is the only book that Swamiji has ever written on the vast and unfathomable theme of spirituality. His other literature is just a compilation of his answers to questions from devotees, spontaneous writings, letters etc. Moreover, the essentials of the spiritual journey are covered so comprehensively in this small book, that all of Swamiji's subsequent writings and answers to spiritual questions are, in a way, merely an exposition on what is already contained in this book. It is a condensed but complete treatise on the philosophical as well as practical aspect of the spiritual journey in its totality, from beginning to end, written subject-wise and sequentially in language of amazing authenticity. It moves equally on the wings of irrefutable logic and intuitive faith until it merges into integral God-Realization. Here in this book, he does

not speak on behalf of any particular religion or sect, but as an authentic representative of that class of seers and sages who have tasted the Divine in its fullness, the possibility of which he sees in all of us. Clearly, the appeal of this book is universal. Many great souls from varied backgrounds, when they read this book, exclaimed in unison, "This is a complete scripture on spirituality." It has been translated and published in Hindi, Urdu, French, Hebrew, Arabic and German and is currently being translated into Gujarati, Russian and Punjabi.

In the first chapter, Swamiji, with the aid of irrefutable arguments and on the basis of the scriptures, answers the question, "Does God exist?" because without having faith in God's existence, no one will embark on the spiritual journey, on the path to God-Realization. His words, imbued with experience, straight away enter the hearts of sceptics and the faithful alike. Here Swamiji has proved the existence of God as eternal, causeless, self-evident Consciousness which all beings experience ceaselessly and spontaneously as their own Self (*Ātmā*). This intuitive and immediate experience of everyone, "I am," does not depend on any qualification, education, social background, conviction or any other factor. It is neither the result of any action nor cause. This unbroken experience of one's "*Is-ness*" remains the same in all

states and at all times — past, present and future. No being ever experiences one's non-existence, or one's unawareness, or absence of love for oneself. This is so because the Self is Bliss absolute and Love absolute, Life absolute and Truth absolute — *Satchidānanda*. And Swamiji equates this Consciousness, i.e. the Self of all beings, with God.

In the second chapter, "God Can and Must be Attained," he goes on to tell us that attaining knowledge of one's true Self or God is the natural and foremost duty of man. It is by God-Realization alone that man becomes fulfilled forever and in every way.

In the third chapter, Swamiji outlines nine basic qualifications expected of a pilgrim of Eternity. These are: sincerity, purity, discrimination, dispassion, self-control, selfless service in the name of God, metaphysical thinking, self-surrender and perseverance. Gurudeva firmly believes that without purity and the necessary discipline of body and mind it is futile to aspire for the Infinite. They are, as it were, the signs of readiness and deep aspiration for the Divine. Swamiji has dealt with all these topics in the highest sense and in a very convincing way. For instance, under the topic of discrimination he has explained the nature of mind, mental intuition and the supramental state with great clarity, and then the value and place of a discriminating, reasoning mind. Similarly, under the topic of self

control he has described the nature of man as being composed of body, *prāṇa* (vital), intellect and the inner Being and then stressed the importance of self-control in terms of spiritual evolution. Under the topic of selfless service in the name of God, he writes:

> Selfless service, in a way, is an avowed acknowledgement of the immanence of the Supreme Lord in the cosmos. The experience of God, who informs the world and yet transcends it, has to be accomplished not only in the timeless silent Self, but also in the comprehensive fullness of His world-manifestation. Without the immediate perception that "***Īshāvāsyam idam sarvam yatkiñcha jagatyām jagat***" — "God is immanent in the whole world" (Īsha Upaniṣhad 1), spiritual attainment cannot be regarded as complete. In and through the integral realization of the Divine, who is both immanent in *Puruṣha-Prakṛiti*, *kṣhara-akṣhara* and in the passive and dynamic powers of Existence, and also beyond them, the concepts of knowledge, devotion and selfless service are properly reconciled.

Likewise, all the prerequisites of a true seeker have been discussed in minute detail with explanations on their practical aspects. He stresses that no matter which spiritual tradition or path a seeker may belong to, these basic qualifications are common and indispensable to all seekers.

In the all-important fourth chapter, "Spiritual Contemplation and Meditation," Swamiji sheds light on the theoretical and practical aspects of contemplation, meditation, *japa* etc, keeping in view the different temperaments of seekers based on the fundamental principles of psychology as revealed in the Gītā and Yoga Sutrās. Though the ultimate spiritual experience transcends the mind and comes only when all the modifications of mind stop, any kind of meditation must involve the mind in the beginning, because man is a mental being. As the mind is a bundle of desires, ideas and emotions, Swamiji therefore gives five basic techniques of meditation according to the way the mind functions. Three of these techniques, categorized as the positive method, involve fixing the mind on any one form, or name (*japa*), or idea/feeling associated with the Divine. Alternatively, in the technique called the negative method, for those who cannot comprehend any finite symbol as being worthy of representing the Divine, the soul has to reject all names, forms, thoughts and ideas. In the fifth technique, called the witnessing method, the soul simply watches the modifications of the mind as a disinterested witness. With steady progress in these practices, the mind becomes more and more pure, stable, passive and alert, and in the end all its modifications are completely stopped, giving way to pure Consciousness, which shines in its pristine purity.

These techniques are perfectly scientific and demystify the labyrinth of discussion on this vast topic. They are transparent and simple. A real seeker of any religion, tradition or faith may, according to his or her temperament and aptitude, select any technique for spiritual practice while retaining the symbols of his or her choice. Thus, Swamiji's approach is integral; it has space for the path of knowledge (*jñāna*), the path of devotion (*bhakti*) and the path of action (*karma*). Also, his teaching is inclusive rather than exclusive because it seeks to divinise all parts of the personality, i.e. physical, *prāṇic*, mental and intellectual.

In the fifth chapter, he alerts the seeker against certain obstacles during meditation like distraction of mind, sleep, attraction to the subtle worlds and over-exertion in one's practice. In the end he describes with motherly care some powerful aids to contemplation and meditation, such as proper diet, *prāṇayāma* and deep conscious breathing, proper place and time, regularity, the importance and role of a spiritual Master, reading of revealed scriptures, association with inspired saints and sages, and balanced living. Having this insightful knowledge about these obstacles and aids is extremely salutary and protective for a spiritual pilgrim.

The next chapter tells us about some common inner experiences which are like milestones at the different

stages of the great spiritual journey. They fill the seeker with faith, strength and conviction, letting him experience the tender touch of the Divine ever taking total care of him in his spiritual voyage.

In the seventh chapter, Swamiji emphasizes the supreme importance of prayer unto the sweet Lord, who is the Self of all, the disinterested lover and ever the protector of His devotees, the Absolute Power, Absolute Bliss and Light. Also included in this chapter is a short and sweet prayer which is a spontaneous outpouring from his sacred heart in the ecstasy of sweet communion with the Beloved.

In the last chapter, he exhorts the reader to "Begin Here and Now," for to postpone one's spiritual journey would be to postpone one's salvation.

This book is rare because it springs from an enlightened mind and heart and because the expression corresponds to the experience, hence its authenticity. Though himself a great monk in the truest sense of the word, Gurudeva has not given much importance to one's outer circumstances like monastic life, religion, faith, caste and creed. It is a great assurance for mankind, as every one of us can begin the great journey towards the Beloved, no matter who or what we are.

It is our sincere belief that this book is the essential autobiography of a great spiritual pilgrim — our

beloved Gurudeva — excluding all gross events and incidents, extending over many, many lives of resolute and absorbing *sādhāna*, right from its auspicious beginning to its blissful, fulfilling end. Oh, what a wonder that this book exists! A thousand, thousand prostrations and deepest gratitude for this great gift.

At his feet,

March 2008 Swami Prem Vivekānanda

Life Profile of Shri Chandra Swamiji Udasin

The great sage, revered Shri Chandra Swamiji Udasin, was born on the 5th of March, 1930, in the village Bhūman Shāh, District Montgomery, now in Pakistan. The village is named after one of the greatest sages and mystics of the eighteenth century, revered Bābā Bhūman Shāhaji. This great sage is the master of our beloved Gurudeva, Shri Chandra Swamiji. Swamiji, who has had the most sacred and mystical relationship with Bābāji, attributes all his herculean efforts and achievements to the latter's unreserved grace. Swamiji, who had an irresistible inclination towards spirituality from his early childhood, is believed to be a very advanced *yogī* of many previous lives.

In the year 1947, Mahanta Girdhārī Dāsji, the tenth master in the line of Bābā Bhūman Shāhji, initiated him into the much-respected *Udāsīn* tradition of Hinduism. This took place through the direct and mystical intervention of Bābāji, who repeatedly appeared to both Swamiji's father and Mahantaji in their dreams and gave them explicit instructions regarding Swamiji's spiritual future.

In his student days he was an extraordinarily gifted and accomplished sportsman and excelled in many events. While he was pursuing his postgraduate studies in science, a very powerful longing for the Divine drove him to seek a first-hand and integral Realization of the Divine in this very life. Possessed by strong dispassion, he abandoned his postgraduate studies, severed all worldly ties, and took to a secluded monastic life. This was in the year 1952, when he was twenty-two years old.

A period of intense *sādhanā* followed. He went to Jammu & Kashmir and spent about eight years there in a cave and in the mountains. Then, from 1961 to 1970, he came to live on a secluded forest island near Sapta Sarovar, Haridwar, on the banks of the holy river Ganges. It is here that he attained the highest and never waning integral spiritual Realization. Many visitors going to his hut found that they had encountered a truly realized soul.

In 1970, at the earnest request of his devotees, he shifted to a small *āshram*, named Sevaka Nivāsa, in Sapta Sarovara, Haridwar. He lived there for twenty years. Then, with the passage of time, as the spot became crowded, noisy and commercial, he began to look for another more secluded place, and found one in the year 1989. The place was located in the quiet, remote and hilly village of Domet on the banks of the holy river Yamunā, some fifty kilometres away from

Dehradun. Immediately, the construction of the building was started. In 1990, Swamiji moved to the partly constructed Sadhana Kendra Ashram.

The new *āshram* was built under his direct guidance. It has been developed as a place of *sādhanā*. The *āshram* is open to all seekers of Truth, irrespective of caste, creed or race. Four sessions of meditation are held daily, in the presence of Swamiji himself, throughout the year. Sincere seekers from all over the country and abroad visit the *āshram* for *sādhanā* and to have *darshana* of this God-man. They come in large numbers, even though there is no advertisement or publicity made by the *āshram*. Word about Swamiji spreads by the love that the devotees have for him.

The *āshram* also serves the poor and the needy in various ways, especially in the areas of education and medical care. Since 2001 the *āshram* has been running a free school by the name of Bābā Bhūman Shāh Vidyā Mandir, which provides high quality education — academic as well as moral — to the poorest children in the area. In 2005 the *āshram* also started a free dispensary, Udāsīnāchārya Shrīchandra Charitable Dispensary, within the *āshram* precincts. In addition, for the last several years the *āshram* has been offering free professional evening courses in tailoring and basic computer training for the unemployed youth of the area.

God inspired, Swamiji has been in unbroken silence for the past twenty-three years. To date, the silence continues and its duration is unknown even to Swamiji himself. His silence is more eloquent than words. To see him is to believe him. A free spirit, humble, simple, tender, non-dogmatic and unobtrusive, he is the very embodiment of Divinity.

Swamiji, now 77 years of age, is an unbelievably charming person with Divinity descending down to the physical level. His pleasing countenance, which is at once peaceful and beaming, his penetrating and meditative eyes, his strong and regal figure, his gentle yet firm demeanour, his alertness and awareness in day-to-day activities, all bring an air of quiet and responsible freedom, making it a sheer delight to be with him. His presence envelops anyone who is a little receptive, in peace and holiness.

These few words about our beloved Master are simply an expression of gratitude to him in introducing the third edition of *The Practical Approach to Divinity*. A more detailed account of his life is to be found in Volume I of *Song of Silence*.

With many, many prostrations and ever at his holy feet,

Swami Prem Vivekānanda

Editor's Note

The first and second editions of *The Practical Approach to Divinity* were originally published in 1967 and 1969 by the late Shri D.R.Monga of Delhi, a close disciple of Swamiji. We take great pleasure in publishing the third edition of this spiritual classic on behalf of Seekers Trust, Sadhana Kendra Ashram.

Gurudeva has kindly reviewed and edited the book at several places for the sake of clarification. Some *shlokas* and verses from the scriptures have also been added for the same purpose. In addition, diacritical marks (i.e. *ā, ñ, ṣ*) have been employed in all scriptural quotations and Sanskrit and Hindi words in order to present a more accurate transliteration. With this end in mind and to ensure correct pronunciation, we have also used the words *Brahma* and *Ātmā* rather than the common spelling of these words — *Brahman* and *Ātman*. It is important to note that *Brahma* indicates the Absolute (Godhead), while *Brahmā* (with long *ā* at the end) is the name used for the Creator aspect of God. A pronunciation guide is provided at the back of the book.

In his answers to spiritual questions, Swamiji almost always uses the gender neutral "his/her" construction when guiding seekers on the spiritual path. However, for the sake of simplicity and to preserve the natural flow of the narrative, in this edition we have retained only the masculine pronoun in many places, though of course the timeless wisdom contained within these pages applies to all alike, regardless of gender, caste or creed.

With regard to capitalization, all words designating the Supreme Reality, God, or any aspect of God, like *Ātmā*, Consciousness, *Nirguṇa*, *Saguṇa*, Spirit, *Puruṣha*, *Satchidānanda*, *Īshvara*, etc. have been capitalized. Moreover, when a noun used for God or any aspect of God is qualified by an adjective, both the adjective and noun have been capitalized, as in the case of Absolute Existence. Of all the words connoting God-experience, only Realization, Fulfilment, and Perfection have been capitalized, as these words signify the complete establishment in the integral Realization of the Lord in all His aspects. Words like omniscient and omnipotent are capitalized only when used as a synonym for God (i.e. the Omnipotent One, the Compassionate), not when describing His qualities or attributes (God is omnipotent and compassionate).

CHAPTER ONE

Does God Exist?

"Yes friend, God does exist.
He is always there with you and within
you, rather you are in Him and you
owe your existence to Him
and Him alone."



Does God Exist?

God exists. He is so evident that it requires no testimony to prove Him. No proof can strengthen His Being, nor can any refutation weaken It. Other things can be proved or disproved, but not He.

God abides in us as our True Self. Self is self-evident. Does the existence of one's own Self need any proof? The most immediate feeling of everyone, "I am," is not an illusion but a real, intuitive experience. On the other hand, if one were to say unto oneself, "I am not," one would be denying what is only real and true. If a person were to force this position upon himself, he would not be a normal individual because his experience would not be empirically valid. A living individual cannot think that he is not alive. In other words, one cannot experience one's non-existence or one's unawareness.

Now it may be noted that the "I-ness" connoted by the phrase "I am" is not to be confused with what is conveyed by the term ego. Whereas ego is a variable

and individual mental operation influencing behaviour, the experience of "I-ness" is universal, constant and true. One has to dive deep within to get this pearl, this real "I." Discrimination between the ego and the True Self is discrimination between the false and the True, between the unreal and the Real. The True Self is much too real, much too obvious to need any disputation.

This brings us to think of Consciousness, consciousness not of this or that object, but Consciousness as It is in Itself, Consciousness as is synonymous with God. God is Consciousness, we can say unhesitatingly. Can Consciousness be disproved? Without Consciousness how would one disprove the existence of Consciousness? Consciousness is an indispensable means even for disproving Its reality or existence. In any argumentation for the proof or disproof of anything, three factors are involved: the prover, the proof and the proved. We could draw a triangle to illustrate the point. In the disputation of Consciousness, even this triangle gets illumined because of Consciousness Itself. Similarly, Consciousness is neither the creation of the "knower," nor the transmutation of what is "known," nor is It any relation of the "knower" with the "known." It is that Principle, eternal, supreme, and beyond time, which illumines the "known," the "knower," and the presence or the absence of their mutual relationship. This triangle is embedded in Consciousness and, at the same time, it

is transcended by It. This should suffice to show that Consciousness is self-proved. If someone were to come to us saying sweetly that he had no tongue, would we not feel amazed? Could we at all believe him? Is it not Consciousness, therefore, that gives to all proof the very ground of possibility? All things are dead. It is verily Consciousness that gives them life!

> ***tam eva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam***
> ***tasya bhāsā sarvam idam vibhāti.***
>
> Only with the light of Consciousness all shine; through Its light alone all are illumined.
>
> Kaṭha Upaniṣhad 2.2.15)

Those who take Consciousness to be a product of matter, an effervescence of a carbon compound, or a mere mechanical adjustment of chemical elements and physical energy, are only playing, as it were, with the superficialities of existence. They are strangers not only to the deep intuitions of the Inner Being, but also to the higher flights of rational thinking. Those rationalist friends are required to be a bit more rational. How can matter feel pain or pleasure? Is it ever possible that matter can, by any transformation, become capable of perceiving, knowing and dominating itself ?

Suppose, for the sake of argument, we take Consciousness to be a product created in time. This presumption will naturally make us curious to know the

sort of existence that would have been there prior to the emergence of Consciousness. What was the pre-consciousness state of creation, we might ask? One may propose any theory in this regard but it is bound to be hollow owing to the lack of direct proof in its favour; a direct proof for the existence of anything or any state must involve Consciousness. Another fact is that the existence of Consciousness in the present is self-evident and too real to be disputed, and that which is real never ceases to be real. In simple words, such a consciousnessless state of existence would not, therefore, be regarded as possible or real. It would be absolutely unreal like the horns of a donkey, which have never been seen. To conceive of Consciousness, therefore, as a product or a thing created, is entirely illogical. Creation of Consciousness is simply not possible, for whatever is created is subject to destruction. In the words of the *Gītā*:

nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ,
ubhayor api dṛiṣhṭo 'ntas tv anayos tattvadarshibhiḥ.

The unreal has no existence and the Real never ceases to be; thus has been perceived by the seers of Truth.

(Gītā 2.16)

We can think of large spaces as easily as small ones; our conception of a mile takes no more room or effort than our conception of an inch. We can think of larger stretches of time or concentrate on a moment's memory.

We can, at will, reduce, magnify or combine images regardless of how they have been combined in our experience. For example, we may not have seen any such creature that has the body of a human being and the head of an elephant, but we can surely imagine such a creature. Does it not show that Consciousness is not limited by time or space? Is it not, therefore, a fact that the beings who manifest the highest degree of Consciousness dominate creation?

Consciousness, the central fact of spiritual intuition, is Absolute. It is *Pūrṇa* or Complete. Furthermore, Consciousness that is perfect must essentially be of the nature of Infinite Bliss or Infinitely Blissful, because it is the feeling of limitation in Consciousness that implies non-bliss. Consciousness which is free from the feeling of limitation is nothing but Bliss. The Lord, therefore, is synonymous with Existence Absolute, Consciousness Absolute and Bliss Absolute.

Do we not pray unto the Lord Supreme in moments of utmost distress when there is no hope of escape from anywhere? It is in this way that the assertion of the Invisible Power can be felt. Also, sometimes our difficulties, which only a short while ago appeared insurmountable, vanish without the least effort on our part and we feel overjoyed. Would you not then admit the working of the hand of God? Again, does not He, as your inner conscience, forbid and condemn you from

within when you become unduly extroverted and are about to indulge in some unholy, malicious act? Does not your Inner Being, in the rare moments of mental quiet and silence, leap out and aspire for some unknown, eternal peace? At times such things do happen and no law of nature can apply to them; they elude all explanation. Do they not provide you with a glimpse of something that is above and beyond the laws of nature?

Who makes the human body with such a marvellous self-adapting and self-adjusting system, which baffles even the highest human intelligence? Who paints so artfully the feathers of birds, which even a master artist cannot copy to exactness? Nature, you may say. But what is this Nature? Is she an Intelligent Power, or insentient and unintelligent? If she is taken to be unintelligent, then such excellent and skilful feats cannot be accomplished by her. If Nature must be regarded as a supreme Intelligent Power, then there should be no harm in giving her the name of God, and, thus, accepting the existence of the almighty Lord.

All things with their dispositions in this universe are found, when carefully examined, to be working not fortuitously but according to certain set laws; the sun, the moon, the earth and the stars move in an ordained course with definite velocities and do not collide with one another. The seasons, the day and night

come and go rhythmically. Who is directing and controlling this grand cosmic play? Does all this not indicate some Infinite, Supreme Intelligence secretly guiding this system of the cosmos?

Who makes your lungs move? Who makes your heart beat? Who gives lustre to your eyes? Who makes your hair grow? Who makes your mind think, your ears hear and your feet walk? Have you ever tried to know this "Who?"

If we think seriously for a while, we find that the visible world is nothing but a conglomeration of the qualities of sound, colour, taste, touch and smell. Can qualities hang in the void by themselves? Can they exist without any base? What is that which supports these qualities and gives them substantial existence?

The world may also be conceived to be an incessant flow of energy. Wherefrom does this energy flow? It must have some source behind it. What is that infinite and inexhaustible reservoir from which all this universal energy is oozing forth?

Everyone wants to live a deathless life; consciously or unconsciously, everyone is ultimately in pursuit of boundless and ceaseless joy. There is also in all of us a universal and innate desire to know more and more. What does all this show? Does it not indicate, even indirectly, that there is something beyond rational

understanding, call it Life Eternal, Bliss Unlimited and Knowledge Infinite? Is it not the Absolute *Satchidānanda* who is ever calling us from within and drawing us from without on the path of evolution?

Things of the world change incessantly—this is a common experience. Now, change in anything, say A, can be perceived only when there is some other thing, say B, which is less changeable in comparison with A. Again, the change in B can only be known when there is another thing, say C, less changeable than B. Similarly, the perception of change in C inevitably requires the existence of a thing, D, which is less changeable than C . . . . We can go on like this indefinitely until we reach something completely unchangeable, and realize that when there is something that does not change at all, then and only then can change be perceived. What is this "Unchangeable Something?"

You say, "The 'I' who had seen and experienced things twenty years ago is the same 'I' who is seeing and experiencing things at present." This assertion of yours proves the fact that you are the same being existing at present, who also existed twenty years past. In other words, your "I" who existed twenty years ago, unchangeably exists even today. Who is this "I," the immutable "I," whom you proclaim existed in the remote past and who is immutably existing even today?

Your physical body, which has completely changed, cannot, surely, be this "I" because your physical body such as it was twenty years ago is not exactly the same today. It has changed quite a bit. Very similarly, your mind, your intellect and your ego too have undergone many mutations and, therefore, cannot be regarded as your "I" that has not changed. Unchangeably existing in the past as well as in the present, who and what is this "I" of yours? This unchangeability of the "I" that you experience is everyone else's intuitive experience as well. Now the question that arises is: "Will this "I" continue to exist even in the future?" Yes, certainly it will. Rather, it already does exist in the so-called future. The experience "I am not" is never possible, as has already been said. Besides, certain cases of prevision of the remote future, as established by holy persons and *yogīs*, are quite genuine. How can these be explained without taking this "I" to exist already in that phase of time which one indirectly knows as the future? Does it not show that this real "I" exists immutably in the past, present and future as well? It would be more appropriate to say that it is this real "I" in which the past, present and future all exist.

The phenomena of extrasensory perception — telepathy, clairvoyance and clairaudience, which modern psychology has acknowledged as true experiences — happen even in ordinary life. Does it not

confirm the *Vedāntic* truth that time and space have no real existence independent of the "I"? What is this "I" before whom all time and space are contracted into a zero? Let us try to know this true "I". It has been appropriately remarked that to know the "I" is to ascend to God.

We find men, particularly holy persons, denying the world, the body and the mind. How could such denial be possible if there were not in man "Something" other than body, mind and intellect? This should be asked to those who do not believe in the existence of the *Ātmā* or Self beyond body, intellect, ego, etc.

Modern science is veering round to the position which accepts that behind everything there is a perfect magazine of power. Evolution is now being explained less and less on mechanical lines and more and more on the principle of an involved freedom and spontaneity concealed within everything. Modern psychology has almost recognized the existence of a Consciousness which has no bounds and of which the personalized, phenomenal consciousnesses are but only imperfect reflections that live and move and have their being in the former. Biology and other sciences are also on their way to admitting indirectly the existence of God in one way or another.

There is, on the other hand, no consistent argument for denying the existence of God. What is, after

all, the proof in favour of the non-existence of the Lord? Do you deny His existence on the grounds that He is not visible? The stars are not visible during the daytime, but their existence cannot be denied on that account. Pain and pleasure, too, cannot be seen, but do you not accept their existence? Can you afford to deny the existence of the places, things and events that you have not seen yourself? Can we say that our grandfather never existed because we never saw him? The existence of our father is proof of the existence of our grandfather. Exactly in the same way, if we do not see the Lord face to face, it does not mean that He does not exist. He is found unmistakably revealed all the time in His saints and devotees who have seen Him, and they are the greatest proof of His existence. Therefore, with full faith in their holy teachings, we should steadfastly tread the path of God-Realization as shown by them. It is the first-hand, direct experience of God alone that can completely dispel all doubts pertaining to God's existence.

Provable or unprovable, God exists. People ask, "Does God exist?" The blessed one answers interrogatively, "Does anything exist except God?" People ask, "Where is God?" The blessed one replies, "Where is God not?" Yes friend, God does exist. He is always there with you and within you, rather you are in Him and you owe your existence to Him and Him alone. He is not far away, sitting in the clouds and giving

mysterious orders and controlling this universe. Dwelling in the hearts of all beings, without being moved Himself, the Lord moves them through His Essential Power. He verily is the "Unmoved Mover":

> ***īshvaraḥ sarvabhūtānām hṛiddeshe 'rjuna tiṣhṭhati,***
> ***bhrāmayan sarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā.***
>
> Dwelling in the hearts of all, the Lord, O Arjuna, makes all beings seated in their bodies move according to their *karmas* by His illusive power (*māyā*). (Gītā 18.61)

He pervades everything and transcends everything. He is everything, but He is also beyond everything. In fact, He cannot be denied. One who denies His existence may be compared to a fish that would deny the existence of water, or to an image denying the existence of its prototype.

Yes, beloved friend, God is nearer to you than your breath. He is closer to you than your *suṣhumnā*.[1] He is the Life of your life, the Mind of your mind, the Ear of your ear and the Speech of your speech:

> ***shrotrasya shrotram manaso mano***
> ***yad vācho ha vācham sa u prāṇasya prāṇaḥ.***
>
> (Kena Upaniṣhad 1.2)

[1] *suṣhumnā* is a *nāḍī* running through the spine, which is generally closed. The opening of it through *prāṇayāma* and other mental disciplines confers upon an individual extraordinary powers and eventually the bliss of divine union.

God is the most compassionate Divine Father who loves you more than your worldly father, mother, sister, brother, your friends and your spouse. It is actually you who have turned your back upon Him. It is actually you who have betrayed Him. It is you who are running hither and thither and trying, as it were, to elude His hands.

It is because of your blurred vision that God seems to you to be a mere myth or an unapproachable "Something." If a blind man cannot see the sun or if someone with defective vision cannot see the sun as it is, should the existence of the sun be denied? Similarly, if someone is unable to realize the Truth, does it justify following untruth? Should we drink poison simply because nectar is beyond our approach? Should we indulge freely in the appetites of the flesh and accept subservience to ignorance simply because God-attainment is difficult and requires arduous discipline and complete transformation of outlook? If we cannot have access to the Divine, the Supreme Bliss, should we bow to the devil and accept him as our master?

In the scriptures the Lord has been spoken of as the Real of the real ones — "***satyasya satyam***." Please believe that God does exist and that He is exceedingly sweet, loving and compassionate. He is ever conversing with you, but you do not hear His sweet divine song because of the disturbing noise of the doubts of

your sceptical intellect and the tumult of the uncontrolled impulses of your heart. Had you the Eyes, you would see Him in the twinkling of the stars! Had you the Ears, you would hear Him in the throbbing of your heart and beating of your pulse! Had you the Heart, you would feel His presence even in a speck of dust! And then, filled to the brim with the feeling of the omnipresence of your sweet Lord, you would joyfully exclaim, "This whole world is verily *Brahma*[2]"—"***sarvam khalvidam brahma***."

How engrossingly sweet and irresistibly transporting it is, O Lord, to find oneself in Thy loving arms and in Thy soothing lap!

The Lord is always with you. May you be always with Him.

Om Om Om

[2] *Brahma* is Absolute Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (often spelt *Brahman*).

CHAPTER TWO

God Can and Must be Attained

"Mere intellectual knowledge of God
is of no value. He must be seen face to face.
He has to be realized and possessed.
It is so because it is He alone
that can quench the thirst
of your soul."

God Can and Must Be Attained

Whether the foregoing pages deserve to be classed as an essay on the existence of Divinity or they appear to be just ramblings on the great spiritual theme, the main idea set forth therein — the idea of the existence of a Supreme Power — should be clear to the reader. Those who have no belief in Him may, after reading these pages, agree to reassess the situation, and those who have never felt disturbed by the great question may be prompted to think awhile on the subject, and those who have believed in Him all along may find their belief stronger than before. For those who are on the path of God-Realization, it is a great advantage to have a strong belief in Him. It helps the mind and makes it light in moments of despair and despondency. It keeps up one's hopes even in adverse circumstances and it eases mental tension. It improves conduct. A firm and steady belief in God as a loving Father changes character and does bring, to a certain extent, a transformation in consciousness too.

Spiritual *sādhanā* may be said to comprise right belief, right method of research, ultimate spiritual experience and Fulfilment. Of these, the last three factors are verily based upon the first, namely right belief. First of all, there must be belief; then one should start the search and the method of research should be right, because through proper research alone can the ultimate spiritual experience and Fulfilment possibly occur. A non-believer would neither perform *sādhanā*, nor would he be able to attain the Lord. As such, the great teacher, Yamarāja, while teaching the most competent aspirant of Truth, Nachiketā, says:

> ***astīti bruvato 'nyatra katham tad upalabhyate.***
>
> To him and him alone who takes "God is" to be quite true, who believes in the existence of the Lord, is God-Realization granted; how can non-believers find Him? (Kaṭha Upaniṣhad 2.3.12)

It is very obvious that only believers can set out to explore the Lord and ultimately reach Him.

But to believe in God is not enough. It is insufficient because it does not dispel all doubts and cannot afford to bring in the unmoved and immovable condition of Being. Mere belief in God is not enough because it is strong conviction alone that creates real self-confidence in the aspirant and helps him to refute arguments advanced against the existence of God. But even this strong faith in God's existence can be shaken by certain

arguments and under very adverse circumstances. The crux of the matter is that without the direct perception of God, neither can one have unshakable belief in God's existence, nor can the intellect have an unalterable determinate conviction about Him. That is to say, so long as a thorough recourse to the Divine is not accomplished, faith in the Lord does suffer from some residue of doubt and indeterminate reason:

> ***nāsti buddhir ayuktasya ua chāyuktasya bhāvanā.***
>
> The one who does not have direct experience of God and has no control over his mind and senses cannot have firm intellectual understanding about God or firm faith in God. Such a one can never have peace and how can he who does not have peace enjoy True Bliss? (Gītā 2.66)

The direct experience of the Lord, therefore, is necessary. As a matter of fact, it will be our greatest misfortune if we miss it in this very life. Kabir says:

> O Friend, hope for Him whilst you live,
> Know Him whilst you live,
> Understand Him whilst you live;
> For in life, deliverance abides.
> If your bonds be not broken whilst living,
> What hope of deliverance in death?
> It is but an empty dream that the
> Soul shall have union with Him
> Because it has passed from the body.
> If He is found now, He is found then; if not,

We do but go to dwell in the city of death.
(Translation by Tagore: Songs of Kabir, III)

The same sentiment is repeatedly stressed in the *Upaniṣhads*:

iha ched avedīd atha satyam asti
na ched ihāvedīn mahatī vinaṣhṭiḥ.

If one realizes *Brahma* while still in this body (in this very life) it is all beneficial and propitious; if not, then it means a great disaster (loss).

(Kena Upaniṣhad 2.5)

iha ched ashakad boddhum prāk sharīrasya visrasaḥ,
tataḥ sargeṣhu lokeṣhu sharīratvāya kalpate.

It is all well if one is able to realize God before the death of the physical body, otherwise one is condemned to be born again and again as different creatures in the different worlds for aeons.

(Kaṭha Upaniṣhad 2.3.4)

Thus it is not only possible to find God in this very life, but it is very essential for everyone to do so.

Here it may be useful and relevant to refer to the great *ṛiṣhis* of yore. If we make an honest and unbiased attempt to understand them, we shall realize that they had a scientific approach to spirituality and that they performed rich experiments and discovered great truths. All along they depended on verification as a sure method of establishing the veracity of an experience. It would be as unscientific to refuse to under-

stand them as it would be stupid not to accept the truth of a known scientific theory. These *ṛiṣhis* have always said, "Friends, God is everywhere; we have seen Him, and you too can see Him." Instead of dismissing their experience as fiction, we must rise up and make an experiment with Divinity and strive to realize the Lord. The attitude of an "armchair scientist" is nowhere praiseworthy.

Yes, God can be known at first hand. He can surely be sought and found. Not only this, it is He alone who can be attained for certain. The things of the world are transitory. How can you get a hold of them or find them? Their attainment may seem to be an attainment today, but it will inevitably be changed into non-attainment tomorrow. Real attainment is that which does not change. The Lord is immutable and immovable. When He is found, He is found forever. It is said, therefore, that it is God alone who can be found in the real sense of the term.

"A bird in hand is worth two in the bush," you may argue. But in this case too, a wise man will think seriously. The fowler's satisfaction in catching birds can never be everlasting. Whatever money he may get for the bird he has in hand, it will not last indefinitely and the next day, if not earlier, he will again have to cast the net with all the uncertainties involved in the process and thus the poor fellow can never be at rest. This applies to all worldly pursuits. It is not at all pos-

sible to satiate our desires completely and to gain tranquillity through the enjoyment of different worldly objects, as is repeatedly pointed out in the scriptures:

na jātu kāmaḥ kāmānām upabhogena shāmyati,
haviṣhā auṣhṇavartmeva bhūya evābhivardhate.

Man's desires cannot be exhausted nor satiated through indulgence and enjoyment. As fire burns more vigorously when *ghī* is poured on it, so also the desires that are sought to be satiated through self-indulgence are positively multiplied, instead of being minimized or exhausted.

yat pṛithivyām brīhiyavam hiraṇyam pashavaḥ striyaḥ,
ekasyāpi na paryāptam tasmād ati tṛiṣhām tyajet.

Even if a man were to get, at one and the same time, all the worldly riches and worldly objects of enjoyment, they would not be found sufficient to gratify his thirst for enjoyment.

The demon of desire is a glutton whose hunger can never be satisfied. This being so, instead of deluding ourselves by the concept of "a bird in hand is worth two in the bush," and thereby giving ourselves up to the free play of self-indulgence, we should devote our energy towards spiritual Fulfilment. In other words, the wise should engage themselves in the task of God-Realization.

And then, why should you fall prey to the pessimistic idea that God may not be found after all? Do

you need a greater authority than that of Lord Jesus, who assures one and all:

> Ask, and it will be given; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.
>
> (Bible: Matthew 7.7)

Needless to dispute what is already established! Great saints of all religions and countries have directly experienced God and attained Perfection. There are saints living even at present who have known the Lord at first hand. Such blessed ones have appeared in every age and in all countries from time to time, in order to fulfil the divine work of spiritual evolution.

Nature functions impartially. The law of nature is always impersonal. If Christ and Chaitanya saw God, you can also see Him today. If Moses or Rāmdāsa saw the Light, why can't you see It? Truth makes no discrimination; the big and small are treated by It equally. If Socrates or Shaṅkara ever knew the Truth, you too can realize It today. If the Buddha and Ramaṇa attained *nirvāṇa* or salvation, why can't you? If one man can get one thing, another man can also get it, provided he pays the proper price for it.

Mere intellectual knowledge of God is of no value. He must be seen face to face. He has to be realized

and possessed. It is so because it is He alone that can quench the thirst of your soul. Reliance on worldly things and external circumstances for happiness is a great delusion. Is it not a big blunder to expect permanent happiness — which is the sole motivating power, veiled or manifest, behind every action of man — in objects and events that are of a passing nature? Permanent peace and happiness can only be found in something that is itself permanent. "Nothing but the infinity of God can measure up to the infinity of the soul and give it complete rest." Money, status, name and fame, position and power cannot give you complete and permanent peace and satisfaction. The *Upaniṣhads* declare:

> ***eko vashī sarvabhūtāntarātmā***
> ***ekam rūpam bahudhā yaḥ karoti,***
> ***tam ātmastham ye 'nupashyanti dhīrās***
> ***teṣhām sukham shāshvatam netareṣhām.***
>
> ***nityo nityānām chetanash chetanānām***
> ***eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān,***
> ***tam ātmastham ye 'nupashyanti dhīrās***
> ***teṣhām shāntiḥ shāshvatī netareṣhām.***
>
> The Real and Eternal Supreme Bliss, which knows no waxing or waning, is attained only by those perseverant ones who ever behold the Supreme Lord seated within, the Lord who is the Eternal of the eternals and the very Life of all lives, who knows all beings and is the Supreme Controller of the universe and who,

> though being One without a second, manifests Himself in the form of many.
>
> (Kaṭha Upaniṣhad 2.2.12-13)

This theme is underlined in the *Upaniṣhadic* treatises so much so that at one place the *ṛiṣhi* goes so far as to say that without immediately perceiving the Divine, any effort to be free from misery is as futile as attempting to roll up the sky:

> ***yadā charmavad ākāsham veṣhṭayiṣhyanti mānavāḥ,***
> ***tadā devam avijñāya duḥkhasyānto bhaviṣhyati.***
>
> As a man is not able to wrap the sky around his body, similarly all his sorrows and sufferings will not come to an end without realizing the Supreme Lord. (Shvetāshvatara Upaniṣhad 6.20)

The aspirant must, therefore, be thoroughly convinced that the fulfilment of his needs and desires lies not in the pursuit of worldly objects and temporalities, but in the Eternal Lord and in His attainment.

The Lord can be attained within no time. The delay in realizing Him is not due to Him but due to us. For ascending to the Supreme Self we can and ought to do something more than reading books, indulging in unnecessary discussions, listening to lectures, devoting a few minutes to daily prayers or following the policeman morality. Certain rules and regulations of spiritual life must be observed; certain conditions of the great way must be fulfilled.

Every science has methods of investigation. One cannot become a chemist by sitting down somewhere and shouting, "chemistry, chemistry." For that purpose you have to go to a school or college, study there for some years, and then go to the laboratory to perform experiments. After years of living away from home, keeping aloof from active politics, isolating yourself from all unnecessary contacts, spending a lot of time and money and working hard day and night, you get a doctorate degree and are considered a competent chemist. Even then your knowledge in that branch cannot be taken as complete and your authority in that subject is not final. Similar is the case with the study of physics, psychology and other branches of learning. The same applies to spirituality. If for the attainment of limited knowledge of a single ordinary subject such sacrifice of time and money is required and such absorbing hard work is needed, how great a sacrifice would be needed to know God, the Infinite, "after knowing whom nothing else remains to be known":

yaj jñātvā neha bhūyo 'nyaj jñātavyam avashiṣhyate.

(Gītā 7.2)

We do not set about performing a task without some prior preparation. It takes only seconds to drink water, but days to sink a well. It requires only one second to switch on a light, but a lot of time is needed for completing the electrical fitting in the house and for

getting the connection from the powerhouse. It takes only minutes to eat a meal but a lot of time to secure and cook the food. It will take little time to realize the Truth, but *sādhanā* is a long process, demanding perseverance and ability.

Rise up, friend, be up and doing. God-attainment is practicable and also urgent. Take to the *sādhanā* of spiritual Perfection. In this lies your real good; in this lies the good of your society, of your nation, of your country. What's more, in this alone lies the good of the entire world.

Om Om Om



CHAPTER THREE

The Basic Qualifications

*"In order to reach His divine threshold,
you have to be equipped with some indispensable
spiritual and moral qualities. The most prominent of
these essential requirements for the sacred pilgrimage are
sincerity, purity, spiritual discrimination, dispassion,
self-control, selfless work and service, metaphysical
thinking, self-surrender, perseverance and
spiritual contemplation."*

The Basic Qualifications

God, in His pure and essential nature, reveals Himself to you when your consciousness rises beyond the confines of time and space, and enters timelessness and spacelessness. But in order to reach His divine threshold, you have to be equipped with some indispensable spiritual and moral qualities. The most prominent of these essential requirements for the sacred pilgrimage are sincerity, purity, spiritual discrimination, dispassion (*vairāgya*), self-control, selfless work and service, metaphysical thinking, self-surrender, perseverance and spiritual contemplation. Leaving the last of these for detailed exposition in the next chapter, it seems necessary to shed a little light on each of the remaining requisites mentioned above.

Sincerity

The majority of people in this world are theists. They do accept and acknowledge, in one form or another, in this way or that, under this name or that

name, the existence of God. Theism generally gives them the feeling that they have a right to approach the Lord when they sometimes find themselves in such a difficult situation as is beyond their control, or else when they implore Him to fulfil their worldly needs.

In this class of theists there are, let us admit, a few individuals who, having been convinced through deep thinking or through association with enlightened ones of the must of God-Realization, do aspire to find the Lord. But even of these awakened souls, not all can be wholeheartedly striving for divine Fulfilment. Doubtless to say, rare are the aspirants who single-mindedly seek spiritual Perfection and work for the same in a determined manner:

manuṣhyāṇām sahasreṣhu kashchid yatati siddhaye.

Hardly one among thousands strives to realize Me (Truth). (Gītā 7.3)

Such souls, whose only aim is spiritual Perfection, perform many acts in order to achieve the Supreme Goal. They go to temples and mosques, attend spiritual discourses everyday, observe religious vows, read scriptures and practise charity. Some of them even sit for contemplation and meditation, but they do not find God. There is no tangible progress in their *sādhanā*; their lives do not show any transformation. They are found today to be just the same undeveloped, unregenerate and uninspired individuals as they were

when they started their *sādhanā* a few years ago. They do not find inner peace. Why is it so? It is because they are not sincere about what they want; they are not serious about what they do; they do everything mechanically, superficially, conventionally, or by way of imitation. They fail in their mission mostly because they lack sincerity. Some of them even go astray. They go on performing *sādhanā* with the motive of achieving something pertaining to some lower level of existence rather than the highest. Sometimes they totally abandon their effort to find the Truth. How can such people expect to find the Lord? Can He be realized without seriousness and sincerity? Saint Kabir says in one of his couplets:

> ***jina khojā tina pāiyā gahare pānī paiṭha,***
> ***maiṅ bāvarī būḍhan ḍarī rahī kināre baiṭha.***
>
> Those who searched by diving deep found the treasure. Those afraid of drowning sat on the bank foolishly waiting.

It may be made clear that here sincerity means spiritual honesty. This is the most important of all the qualifications for a seeker of God. What do you want to achieve in life? What do you live for in this world? Let every aspirant of Truth search his mind and ask himself the question everyday, "What am I living for?" Is God the only goal of your life, or is He only one of the many ideals that you aspire to realize in life?

Spiritual honesty makes it incumbent upon you to make the Lord the only purpose and aim of your life.

Do you give the highest importance to God-Realization or do you invoke Him merely for worldly ends? Sincerity unto the Lord demands that He should be approached only for His sake and not for name, fame or power. Temporal things have to be made only a means to God; God is not to be made a means for temporal things. One who asks for worldly things in lieu of worship offered unto God is, in the words of *bhakta* Prahlāda, just a trader and no more: "***yasya āshiṣha āshāste na sa bhṛityaḥ sa vai vaṇik.***" (Shrīmadbhāgavata 7.10.4)

Granted that you take the Lord to be the highest goal that one should achieve and you really wish to find Him; but what are you doing to realize your ambition? Are you making the best of the means you have in order to find Him? Is your wealth, your body, your mental and intellectual power being utilized rightly by you for God-Realization? Yes, that alone would determine the depth of your spiritual honesty.

It is a fact that man gives up a thing of lesser value in favour of another thing that appears to him to be of greater worth. Are you ready to give up your worldly things and relatives if God-attainment requires you to do so? How much time do you devote to worldly pursuits, and how much do you spend to arouse the

latent, invisible Divine in you? That is, indeed, the measure to assess the sincerity of your spiritual aspiration.

Sincerity unto God is the greatest secret of spiritual *sādhanā.* Be sure, if you become even ninety percent sincere, then one half of your journey is accomplished.

Purity

Having known what spiritual sincerity signifies, it may be asked, "How can one be spiritually sincere and what should be done to develop this requisite?" It is the purity of being that gives birth to and nourishes spiritual sincerity.

One important thing to be mentioned here is that almost all virtues are correlated with one another. They grow and develop in close relation; one aids the other. They are interdependent. Evil tendencies, too, are mutually linked in the same manner. If one evil tendency takes firm root in a man, all other related propensities also appear in him. Similarly, if one good tendency gets weakened in a man, all other related virtues also become weak. In this context it will not be out of place to quote here a useful piece of dialogue between King Bhoja and the famous poet, Kālīdāsa.

Once the great poet Kālīdāsa went in the disguise of a *bhikṣhu* or monk to King Bhoja in order to beg food from him. Seeing his *kanthā* (*gudaḍi*) with many

holes in it and in a worn-out condition, the king said to the *bhikshu*, "Your *kanthā* seems to be very, very old."

Bhikshu: It is actually not a *kanthā*. It is a fishing net.

King: Do you, the monks, catch fish and eat them?

Bhikshu: I take wine and cannot do without fish when I drink.

King: But isn't taking wine and meat absolutely prohibited for monks?

Bhikshu: I don't take them daily. I drink wine and eat meat only when I go to a prostitute.

King: Oh! You also go to prostitutes?

Bhikshu: I fear none. Placing my feet on the heads of my enemies, I walk on fearlessly.

King: But how is it that people happen to become your enemies?

Bhikshu: I am also used to gambling. For that purpose I need a lot of money and to fulfil this need I have to take recourse to stealing as well. Thus, many men turn against me and become my enemies.

King: O Lord, this recluse seems to be full of all kinds of sins.

Replying finally, the poet, disguised as a monk, exclaimed in a serious tone, "When one says adieu to one noble propensity, other good qualities abandon him automatically. Similarly, when one evil tendency possesses you, others do the same and overcome you unfailingly."

The relation between sincerity unto God and purity, both of which are members of one and the same family of virtues, is circular and reciprocal. They are, as it were, wedded to each other. The more pure you become within and without, the more sincere you grow towards God; and an increase in sincerity unto Him, in turn, accelerates your efforts to purify yourself. Loss of purity and sincerity towards God would clearly mean losing God Himself.

What is meant by purity? Does it mean keeping away from conjugal sin? Does it consist in keeping your body and your house neat and clean? Does it lie in refraining from telling lies and cheating others? Yes, it means all of these, but it also means much more. Purity signifies complete absence of ill will, evil motives, untamed emotions and disorderly passions in an individual. All the weaknesses of an impure mind, such as lust, greed, wrath, delusion and hypocrisy are to be totally avoided. Cravings and aversions of the vital being (symbolized in the *Vedas* by a horse to be offered as sacrifice in the *yajña* of self-purification

performed for God-Realization), corruption, self-exaltation, envy and ego — the mother of all weaknesses — must be exorcized. So long as even the shadow of such degrading negative propensities lingers in an individual, it is not at all possible to find the Lord in this life, nor to enjoy the emancipation of a blessed life. This emancipation is not realized by anyone except the person who is free from the weaknesses as mentioned above. It is not tasted by the intellectual who knows different systems of theology or who is well versed in different schools of philosophy, or by one claiming to be aware of mysticism or claiming mastery over it:

nāvirato dushcharitān nāshānto nāsamāhitaḥ,
nāshāntamānaso vāpi prajñānenainam āpnuyāt.

God-experience, much less its Fulfilment, is denied to him who has not isolated himself from sin, whose mind is ever unsteady and unsatisfied; it is also denied to him who is not at peace with himself, even though he may possess a sharp intellect in his day-to-day life. (Kaṭha Upaniṣhad 1.2.24)

On the positive side, purity entails the inculcation of all the cardinal virtues, such as frugality, non-violence, humility, selfless service, contentment, forgiveness and simplicity. These qualities lead one to the path of Divinity. Purity also involves fairness in daily dealings based on justice and impartiality. It

demands the purification of all the elements that make up a personality — the body, the *prāṇa*, the mind and intellect; it also implies the purification of *vyvahāra*, or external behaviour.

How and by what methods and means can this spiritual purity, this lofty state of being, be achieved? Is performing ablutions and pilgrimages to holy places, or opening a free kitchen for the poor, reading the scriptures or practising physical mortification sufficient to that effect? These things verily do some good if performed not conventionally but faithfully, with a spirit of deliberate sacrifice.

As regards the efficacy of severe physical austerities in the development of purity, let it be borne in mind that resorting to extreme physical tortures like extreme fasting and harsh bodily penance such as standing on one foot for years and years is not advisable. Instead of purifying the mind, they may bring about a swelling of self-pride and a violent puffing up of the ego. Moreover, they may prove so harmful that even the collapse of the body and consequently the collapse of the *sādhanā* cannot be ruled out. Also, there is a danger of the insurgence of an uncontrollable reaction and revolt by the physical-vital consciousness, which may spoil the entire *sādhanā* and spell spiritual disaster. Instances in this regard are not wanting. We know the cases of some *sādhakas* who adopted such

violent methods to compel God to fulfil them (and to capture Him, as it were, forcibly) who either became invalids themselves and to society after many years of harsh penance, or else returned to the course of such extreme self-indulgence and self-gratification as even an ordinary *sādhaka* would refrain from.

The most efficacious means of self-purification are a clear understanding of the nature of things, the perpetual invoking of divine grace and the Lord's help towards that end, with constant remembrance of God and constant discrimination.

Discrimination

Today man runs about fast and blindly. He does not know the whence and whither of his life; he simply runs and runs. At times he stumbles, falls, gets up and runs again, but he does not know where to go and why there is all that fuss. He does not want even to think of it. This is a state of grave degradation. Even animals, through evolution, are rising up from a lower state to a higher one. But alas, the man of today is, through indiscrimination and blind pursuits, on the way downward.

Man is considered to be a higher being than animals because he has the faculty of thinking. He perceives objects, evaluates circumstances, chooses and acts, subconsciously in the beginning, consciously when

he grows up. He does all this mentally. The animal also perceives, evaluates, chooses and acts but it does so merely instinctively. The superman, who rises up beyond the limitation of discrimination, as also beyond the partial intuitions of mental consciousness, performs all these acts through supramental intuition, in the form of entirely spontaneous activity.

Another important thing that must be thoroughly understood is that the spontaneity of Consciousness does abide, though concealed and veiled in various ways, in each and every plane of the world manifestation. In the higher hemisphere it is the spontaneity of Essential Bliss, Knowledge and Activity. In the lower hemisphere, which is operated by the three modes of *Prakṛiti*, there is a difference in the revelation of the essential powers of Consciousness owing to the variation in the thickness of the veil of ignorance that the modes of Nature constitute.

In the consciousness represented by the five senses of perception is found bliss, intuition and spontaneous activity of one order, and in the mind-consciousness, of the other order. An animal is a being that belongs totally to the senses, whereas man is essentially a mental being. In man, consciousness is firstly revealed in the form of mental discrimination and afterwards, as the partial light of mind-intuition. An animal cannot know the things that are super-sensory. Man is able to

get a glimpse, through discrimination, of the existence of super-sensory things, forces and beings, and can partially know them directly through mental intuition.

The status of supramental consciousness is actually beyond the grasp of the mind. It denotes the complete establishment of the whole being in the perfect *jñāna-vijñāna* (Perfect Knowledge) which is at once passive and dynamic in relation to the world manifestation, at once essential and comprehensive, and at once the direct spiritual awareness of the Supreme Being and a right intimate knowledge of the principles of His existence, *Prakṛiti*, *Puruṣha* and the rest. Rising up to this supramental state entirely expels and eliminates all the apparent limitations and dualities created and imposed upon us by the blundering mind — even the duality between awareness and activity is dispelled. This apart, the activities carried out through this supreme state of consciousness are not based on mental discrimination, which always works on the basis of the conception of the duality of the Real and the unreal. For discriminating between things, one has to come down to a much lower level. In other words, there is a vast difference between the intuition pertaining to the senses and the intuition pertaining to the mind; and the supramental intuition, of course, transcends both these categories of intuition. The actions performed by one possessed by, or at least in touch with, the supra-

mental state are essentially divine, quite superior to those performed by and through perpetual strife among the modes of Nature. In this supramental state, the transcendental divine play of the all-sided freedom of the Divine becomes manifest in such a being through *mahāmāyā*, the Divine Conscious Power.

Animals are completely ruled by nature; man is free to do *karmas* (actions), but has no control over the fruits thereof; the superman enjoys perfect release and achieves complete self-mastery. In order to claim his natural manhood, man must have discrimination, without which he can be no more than a beast—"***viveka hīna nara pashu samānā***." In this context, an anecdote deserves to be quoted about the great woman mystic of Kashmir, who was a highly inspired saint, revered alike by Hindus and Muslims. Laleshvarī by name, she blessed the people of Kashmir with spiritual awakening about six hundred years ago. With regards to her scholastic qualifications, she had none; but the words she spoke, in the form of rich poetry impregnated with profound truths of spiritual Realization, directly touched not only the heart but also the Spirit. Her *vākas* provide sufficient hints to show that she had gained the highest level of spiritual experience through the *sādhanā* of the psycho-physical system of *yoga* and that she also possessed *vibhūtīs* or extraordinary *yogic* powers.

In a village a short distance from Srinagar, Laleshvarī lived in the home of her father-in-law. A festival used to be held once a year in that village just near Laleshvarī's house, in which many people from near and far would participate. Some women of a neighbouring locality called on Laleshvarī at her house and invited her to accompany them to the festival. But the proposal was turned down by Laleshvarī's father-in-law, who said that it did not look nice for women to go to a place where so many men, not known to them, had assembled. On hearing this Laleshvarī laughed and said, "There is no man present in that assembly; you can just look out through the window." And when her father-in-law looked through the window, he saw there not men but a gathering of dogs, pigs and wolves. He was wonderstruck at this. Laleshvarī then spoke seriously, "Man is verily he who has the power of discrimination, who can distinguish between the Real and the unreal, between right and wrong, and who constantly strives to give up the wrong and follow and stick to what is right. A man is truly he who, having differentiated between the passing and the permanent, shakes off temporal affections and decides finally to realize the Eternal. One who is bereft of discriminating power and who just whiles away this priceless human life is, indeed, an animal and not a man." The same thing is found in the scriptures:

> ***khādate modate nityam shunikaḥ shūkaraḥ kharaḥ,***
> ***teṣhām eṣhām ko visheṣho vṛttir eṣhām cha tādṛishī.***
>
> Dogs, pigs and asses eat, drink, sleep and indulge in sex relations; if man, too, spends his life merely in the gratification of such appetites of the flesh, what then is the difference between him and an animal?

In light of what has been said, we see that he alone who has the discriminating faculty and who also uses it has the right to be called a man.

The word discrimination connotes and covers many an idea. In *Vedāntic* parlance it is most commonly taken to mean discernment between the Real and the unreal. What is Real and what is unreal? How can these be differentiated from each other? It may be easy to speak of this difference, but it is certainly difficult to live up to the standard and principles involved in it for the purpose of spiritual Fulfilment. The criterion is simple: the unreal is that which at one time exists and at another time exists not. Everything that is subject to decay and death is unreal. Thus all transient things and events fall under the category of the unreal.

Now, everything that is finite must sooner or later be shattered into pieces and pass away. Hence the Real, to be real, must be that which is Infinite. In other words, the Real is That which is unlimited by time and space; it is the Eternal One.

The world of name and form, in all its gross, subtle and causal planes of manifestation, is unreal and God or *Ātmā* or *Brahma* alone is Real — this understanding is discrimination as defined by the *Vedāntic* school of thought:

brahma satyam jagan mithyetyevam rūpo vinishchayaḥ,
so 'yam nityānityavastuvivekaḥ samudāhṛitaḥ.

A deep and firm intellectual understanding that *Brahma* alone is Real and the world is unreal is what is called discrimination between the Real and unreal.

(Vivekachūḍhāmaṇī 20)

Let it be noted here carefully that unreal does not, however, necessarily mean an illusion or a creation by any individual being. It simply implies the impermanent, transient and temporal nature of things.

To distinguish between good and bad, essential and non-essential and between means and ends is also communicated by the word discrimination. As such, it means a deep, penetrating reflection and not superficial thinking.

Here we need not discuss what is good and what is bad. We may only say that from the spiritual point of view, whatever helps spiritual unfoldment is good, and whatever hampers it is bad. What should be done and what should not be done? Which line of behaviour is good, which is better and which is the best for an individual to follow? All this involves discrimination.

Right discrimination is not based only upon speculation, but on knowledge and experience. It should not be mistaken for dry intellectualism, because essentially it implies deep insight into the nature of things. A man of discrimination will always strive to find out the proper value and place of a thing. A man with discrimination feels, even while dealing with temporal objects, that a time will come when these objects will cease to exist. He can visualize his future state of mind even when the present is very much with him. He is also deeply conscious, even while alive, that a day will come when he too will not exist physically. All this is so because he has thought over the basic nature of things. His discrimination confers upon him the power and ability to be peaceful in life.

When discrimination between the fleeting and the lasting, and the good and the highest good is ripe, it inevitably leads to indifference towards things that are of a passing nature and to concentration on That which is permanent.

Dispassion

This age may be, without any hesitation, called the age of distractions. Chaos and confusion prevail everywhere. The most celebrated achievements of modernism, say for instance, the modern means of communication, the radio, press, cinema and tele-

vision, instead of playing a really useful role in making the world a peaceful place, have brought us to the brink of disaster. We know only too well what havoc the cinema and television are playing with our youth. The teacher in the class and the parents at home are engaged in a losing battle against the youth misguided by the media. It is true that it can play an educative role as well, but the question is: has it played such a role so far? The press, having been politicised, has become a formidable means of spreading hatred and falsehood among people. Honesty, innocence and truth often become casualties everyday everywhere, to the enormous power of the press. There is a general decline of values and standards of good behaviour. Good neighbourly behaviour, humane and cultured behaviour, good social and political behaviour and even good academic behaviour are becoming rare. Everyone can be heard thinking aloud, "Oh, the good old days!" Some areas of the world, known in modern parlance as "backward," were only a few decades ago — before the advent of these modern means of communication — places where innocence, simplicity and happiness prevailed, but visit these places now and you will find that the milk of human kindness has dried up and happiness does not exist. The demon of desire — the greatest enemy of dispassion — is in its prime youth. The people have become mad after wealth and they are ready to sell out their religion, their character and

their freedom for a few coins of silver. Many people have started regarding dispassion as a symptom of an impotent mind that cannot face the blows of this world.

To say anything about dispassion under such conditions may appear frivolous talk, but a brief discussion of it should not be omitted here; firstly, because dispassion is a *sine qua non* of deliverance and illumination; secondly, because there are many misunderstandings about it.

The Sanskrit word for dispassion is *vairāgya*, which can be translated rather freely as absence of attachment:

> ***vigato rāgo yasmāt sa virāgaḥ,***
> ***virāgasya bhāvo vairāgyam.***
>
> The word *virāgaḥ* means absence of attachment and the word *vairāgya* is the abstract noun of the word *virāgaḥ*.

At its highest, *vairāgya* denotes that state of mind in which one is completely non-attached to the world. Quite evidently, attachment is a thing of the mind and dispassion, or renunciation of attachment needs must also pertain to the mind. The absence of certain things or of certain outer conditions is neither the test nor the essential quality of dispassion. The absence of certain things should not be confused with detachment from things. A man may possess no wealth at all, but he

may be inwardly burning with desire to possess the same; effective poverty and affected poverty are not altogether the same thing. *Vairāgya* is essentially an attitude of mind in which the "mystic participation" of Consciousness with temporal objects is abolished by and by.

Attachment may present itself in numerous forms. There may be an attachment to wealth, to one's body, to relatives, to friends, to devotees or admirers; it may also be to one's caste and creed, to one's intellectual, political, social and religious convictions. Dispassion means the breaking of all these attachments.

Maharṣhi Patañjali defines *vairāgya* as that controlled state of mind which is completely free from greed for all objects that have hitherto been seen or heard of:

> ***dṛiṣhṭānushravikaviṣhayavitṛiṣhṇasya***
> ***vashīkārasañjñā vairāgyam.***
>
> (Yoga Sūtrās of Patañjali 1.15)

Most commonly there are three things in this world that allure, entice and assail the mind of man. These are wealth, name and fame, and lust. There is another allurement too, and that is the allurement of heaven. The desire to go to heaven is, as a matter of fact, nothing but an extension of the desire to enjoy the sense objects on a larger scale and for a longer period, because the subtle objects of heaven are supposed to

yield more sensory thrills. All these temptations comprise the standing obstacles that must be surmounted and surpassed in order to achieve spiritual Perfection. The desire for name and fame is considered to be the hardest of the obstacles on the divine path. As Kabir says in one of his couplets:

> ***kañchana tajanā sahaja hai sahaja triyā kā neha,***
> ***māna baḍāī aru īrṣhyā durlabha tajanā eha.***
>
> It is easy to give up money and wealth. It is also easy to resist the attraction to the opposite sex. But rare is the one who is able to give up envy and the desire for name and fame.

Not to speak of the desire for winning name in this present life, is there any scarcity in this world of people who desire to be remembered even after death, and who keep on striving for the same? Someone once read to us from a newspaper the report of a murder case. A man murdered an important, highly respected leader of his country and was caught red-handed. A legal suit was filed against him. While explaining the cause of committing that murder, the convict said, "I tried many methods to win name but could not succeed in any way. Ultimately, having completely succumbed to this desire, I lost my temper and committed this murder, thinking that so long as the name of this important man remains in the world, my name will also be there." Granted that this incident is an exceptional case, but it

is not at all incredible. The desire for name and fame is a desire deeply rooted in the mind.

The desire to win fame is a great barrier in the way of spiritual advancement and it must be knocked down and crossed over for the complete cultivation of dispassion.

A little reflection exposes the vanity of desire. What if you own grand buildings or even skyscrapers? What if you have hoarded millions of rupees, which serve no other purpose than decorating your unbreakable and fireproof secret safes? What if you win, or have won, a high chair in parliament? What if you have built up a fine, strong body? All these are transient things, which can betray you at any time; you shall have to part with them, willingly or unwillingly, one day. This temporal life is only like a bubble that may burst at any moment:

> ***jalabudbudavan mūḍha kṣhaṇavidhvansī jīvanam,***
> ***kimartham shāshvatadhiyā karoṣhi duritam sadā.***
>
> O stupid man! This temporal life is transient and fleeting like a bubble of water. Why, then, taking it to be eternal, indulge in wrong actions?

Is it wise to squander all the precious time of this human life in gaining and possessing things that have no firm foundation, things which cannot provide you with inner peace? Is it wise to sell out the Eternal for the ephemeral? If you mistake the temporary and transient for what is permanent, you do not have any

power of discrimination; it only implies the total bankruptcy of discriminating power on your part. These perishable things will not make your life secure, nor will they satiate the thirst of your inner soul. They may, on the other hand, only take you away from the path of Bliss if you become attached to them.

Are you really desirous of insuring your life for everlasting peace? The only way is to seek and find a place in the heart of the Lord, or to make your own heart a permanent habitation of the Divine. And this will be possible only if you withdraw your entire affection from worldly gifts and direct it to the "Great Giver." Lord Rāma reveals the secret of unadulterated and one-pointed devotion in the following words:

jananī janaka bandhu suta dārā,
tana dhanu bhavana suhṛida parivārā.
saba ke mamatā tāga baṭorī,
mama pada manahi bāňdha kara ḍorī.
asa sajjana mama ura basa kaise,
lobhī hṛidaya base dhana jaise.

The one who withdraws his mind from the various ties of affection that bind a man to his mother, father, brother, son, wife, physical body, wealth, home, friends and relations and then gathers them up and twists them into a single strong string with which he binds himself (with single-minded devotion) to My feet, abides in My heart even as riches reside in the heart of a covetous man.

(Shrī Rāmcharitamānasa, Sundarakāṇḍa 47.2.3)

When you start dwelling permanently in the Lord's heart, or when the Lord manifestly resides in your heart, you will develop a great sense of security. When you possess the tree, you also possess its shade. The Lord has said Himself in holy scriptures, time and again, that He provides the devotee with every kind of protection. He has pledged Himself to grant full security, spiritual as well as material, to His devotees.

> ***yogakṣhemam vahāmy aham;***
> ***dadāmi buddhiyogam tam;***
> ***mokṣhayiṣhyāmi mā shuchaḥ;***
>
> I bring full protection and personally attend to your needs; I confer the liberating knowledge on you; I shall absolve you of all sins, grieve not. (Gītā 9.22; 10.10; 18.66)

All these are the words of the Lord. These are not empty words; they are the voice of the Master. He has fulfilled them always, and He will fulfil them every time. The lives of His devotees and saints, whom He did own and whom He did rescue, show the truth of these words. But all this has been promised only for those devotees and those saints who are perfectly sincere unto Him, whose faith in Him is unshakable, who, depending upon no one else, constantly think of Him and who are ever united with the Lord through meditation and through singing His name and His glories with single-minded devotion and love. And this firm and constant love unto the feet of the Lord cannot be

achieved without a good deal of dispassion. Towards this end it is necessary to be perfectly detached from the world; for all this, one must develop *vairāgya.*

In certain circles of asceticism, dispassion or *vairāgya* is identified with hatred or contempt towards the things and beings of this world. This interpretation is wrong. The word *vairāgya* can never imply hatred of the world. Hatred, in whatever form it may be, is in fact only inverted attachment. Hatred towards certain things or persons indicates the fact, as the science of psychology tells us, that attachment to those things and persons is concealed in the one who hates, though he may not know it, or knowingly may not let it appear in him.

Besides, real *vairāgya* is not based on the disgust and frustration of a defeated life. Nor does it imply running away from life. In this context, an incident can be quoted that I heard in a discourse given by a sage. This incident brought about an enormous change in the outlook of a Buddhist *yogī*, Tamīno by name, who was known to be a follower of the Hīnayāna School of Buddhism.

Most resolutely, working with remarkable patience and steadiness, constantly living in solitude, Tamīno had performed the *sādhanā* of unbroken contemplation for a long period. Through the process of self-negation, adopting the negative way of approach to Self-Realization,

"not this, not that," he had earned, very arduously, a deep inwardness and was privileged to enter the seventh stage of contemplation, where the world disappears totally. Dwelling uninterruptedly in this state of Consciousness (in which the world vanishes completely in name and form) he found it irresistible to enjoy this profound peace of the silent Self, and lived in a Buddhist temple in a forest, usually visited by no one. Thus, he spent his days.

A strange incident took place one day. Just as Tamīno was sitting for contemplation at some distance from the temple, a traveller passed by. While Tamīno was absorbed in the attributeless *Ātmā,* some robbers rounded up the traveller. The traveller called out to Tamīno again and again, and cried for help; but the latter was not at all conscious of the traveller's miserable condition because he was completely merged in the profound depths of the silent and passive Self. They beat the traveller, wounded him, robbed him, and thinking him to be dead, left him there and slipped away. Badly injured, unable to get up, lying in a most serious condition, the traveller kept calling out to Tamīno for help and then fell unconscious. All this Tamīno came to know only when he opened his eyes on returning to consciousness, as we would call it. He was surprised to witness the scene and for a minute became paralysed, as it were! Then he recovered, stood up, walked over to the unconscious traveller and

examined him. His pulse seemed to be still working; life was still there in his body. Tamīno brought water, sprinkled it on his face and bandaged his wounds. But by then the victim had lost a lot of blood. He finally opened his eyes after a few moments and, speaking with much difficulty in a staggering voice, exclaimed, "What good is there in coming now and doing all this? When I was crying for help, you did not come!" And with these words, he breathed his last.

Tamīno's soul became utterly perturbed and he trembled with extreme sorrow. All the inner peace he had earned over so many years, with unbroken practice of moral discipline and contemplation, by living the life of a saint, fled away in a moment's time. With a restless heart he walked slowly to the temple and sat before the statue of Lord Buddha. This incident created in his mind a doubt that disturbed the peace he had been previously enjoying. He wanted to get this doubt removed directly by the very person of Lord Buddha. Having come to know the true aspiration of His devotee, whose faith had been shaken, Lord Buddha appeared from the statue before Tamīno. Consequently, a dialogue took place between them as follows:

Tamīno: Lord, was Your gospel true?
Buddha: True, and false also.
Tamīno: What was true in it?
Buddha: Dispassion.

Tamīno: What was false in it?
Buddha: The escapist attitude towards the struggle of life.

There are two imports hidden in this story. The first is that to attain the highest state of Realization, it is not at all necessary to run away from the world and go to the forest or a secluded place, but what is surely indispensable is to have dispassion towards all transient things, situations and relationships. The second import of the story is that if any happening or situation gives rise to compassion in the mind of a seeker in such a way that it disturbs his or her mind, it indicates that *sāttvic* ego, though in a subtle form, still lurks there. However, it should be remembered that though the virtues born of *sāttvic* ego, such as compassion, might present themselves as subtle *sāttvic* obstacles to very advanced seekers, after being established in God-experience, such virtues as compassion, empathy, forgiveness, etc., called *daivī sampatti* (divine treasures) in Chapter 16 of the *Gītā*, naturally become part of the being of the Blessed Ones in their dealings with others. In fact, morality, ethics and right conduct are the shadows of God-Realization. All the virtues dwell in an enlightened one effortlessly and naturally.

Thus *vairāgya* does not teach running away from the struggle of life; as a matter of fact, such an attitude is quite alien to the true spirit of dispassion. It does

not necessitate the giving up of one's honest profession. The true meaning of dispassion is non-attachment, which is a necessary prelude to the attainment and development of divine love, or to Self-Realization, or to the Realization of and Establishment in the Supreme Lord.

Running after the world and its things is spiritual degradation, but to discard, indiscriminately, all that you have, or all that God has given you, is a blunder born of immature thinking.

If you have no resources to maintain yourself, if you do not have very deep faith and full confidence in God, if you have no spiritual power within you, do not think of giving up the world under the pretence of *vairāgya*. By taking to the life of a recluse in such a faithless state of mind, you cannot perform *sādhanā* in the right way and in the right spirit. It will simply make you totally dependent upon others; in addition to finding a foothold somewhere, you shall have to run from door to door for bread to sustain your body.

Dispassion does not go against doing some work for the maintenance of the body and for meeting the bare necessities of life. It also does not go against performing selfless service; but these means are not, of course, to be confounded with the ultimate end, which must not be lost sight of anywhere, at any time.

Vairāgya is not philosophical indifference. It denotes complete renunciation of the sense of "I," "me" and "mine." The main factors by which the spirit of dispassion can be developed and strengthened are:

1. Constant meditation on the transitory nature of all worldly objects, events and relationships.
2. Associating and living in close touch with those saints and holy ones who are imbued with dispassion.
3. Contemplation on the nature of the relationless *Ātmā.*
4. Constant remembrance of the glories of the Supreme Lord who, transcending all false relations, is the disinterested Lover of us all.
5. Day-to-day reading of such books and life stories of saints that awaken in us the spirit of dispassion.

Alone we come and alone we go; whom, then, should one consider to be one's friend or relative in this world? This body, the objects and relatives are not ours. May we not be theirs! The following pieces of poetry from Guru Nānaka Dev and Nārāyaṇa Swami further elucidate this theme:

terā to koī hai nahīň māta pitā suta nāra
kaho nānaka bin hari bhajana supane jyoň sansāra

Mother, father, son and wife — none is yours. Guru Nānaka says that without God remembrance the world is but a dream.

dhana jobana yuň jāegā jaň vidhi uḍata kapūra
narāyaṇa gobinda bhaja kyoň chāte jaga dhūra

As camphor evaporates, so will your wealth and youth leave you. Narāyaṇa exhorts, "O man! Instead of running after filthy worldly pleasures, remember God."

sātha na chāle bina bhajana bikhyā sagalī çhāra
hari hari nāma kamāvanā, nānaka eha dhana sāra

Guru Nānaka says, "Nothing accompanies you after death. Therefore renounce illusory worldliness. Remember the name of Hari (God), for that alone is the real asset."

narāyaṇa sansār meň bhūpati bhaye aneka
maiň merī karate gaye le na gaye tṛiṇa eka

So many kings and landlords departed from this world while still attached to worldly things. Narāyaṇa says, "Alas, they were unable to take along even a blade of grass!"

It is on the grave of attachment that the foundation stone of the "spiritual project" can be laid. It is the death of desire that gives birth to dispassion; and only through detachment towards the temporal world can love for God be secured as well as protected. Only thus, can liberating knowledge be made the very breath of our being.

Vairāgya is always a rare transformation and a great privilege: "***kasya sukham na karoti virāgaḥ***" — "Who is not made happy through dispassion?"

Self-Control

Self-control and self-mastery are the same thing. Man is made of body, *prāṇa*, mind, intellect and the Inner Being, the Self. This Self is essentially the Lord Supreme who, dwelling in the body, is the Guide, Enjoyer, Sustainer and Controller of the entities mentioned above:

> ***upadraṣhṭānumantā cha bhartā bhoktā maheshvaraḥ,***
> ***paramātmeti chāpy ukto dehe 'smin puruṣhaḥ paraḥ.***
>
> The Spirit dwelling in this body, is really the same as the Supreme. He has been spoken of as the Witness, the true Guide, the Sustainer of all, the Experiencer, the Overlord and the Absolute as well. (Gītā 13.22)

Self-control means perfect control over the body and its actions, as well as perfect control over the mind and intellect with their corresponding psychic functions. Self-control is a tremendous task, indeed. But if it is true, and it most certainly is, that the inner *Puruṣha* is the real Upholder, Sustainer, and Lord of *Prakṛiti* or Nature, then at a certain stage of evolution the attainment of complete self-mastery by the evolving soul must become not only a living reality, but also a natural and effortless act on its part. Evolution, in fact,

implies the process of progressive unfoldment of the Real Nature and essential powers of *Purușha* involved in *Prakṛiti.*

This is not the proper place to discuss at length such a vast subject as spiritual evolution. Here we will restrict the import of self-control to a certain command over the body, senses and mind, by virtue of which the path of absorption in the Lord is made easier and smoother. A *shloka* of the *Gītā*—the import of which also appears in the *Kaṭha Upanișhad*, with some change of words — says:

> ***indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur indriyebhyo param manaḥ,***
> ***manasas tu parā buddhir yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ.***
>
> The senses are superior to the visible objects, including the body; the mind is superior to senses; the intellect is superior to mind; and superior to intellect is the inner *Purușha.* (Gītā 3.42)

To make this point clear, the *ṛișhi* of the *Kaṭha Upanișhad* puts forth an analogy in which the body is compared to a chariot; the senses are compared to the horses that draw this chariot; the mind is taken to be the bridle; the intellect is taken as the charioteer and the soul as the master of them all. A safe, smooth and quick journey is ensured if the chariot is of a high standard, the horses are strong and young, but adequately tamed, the bridle is good enough to hold the horses, the charioteer is a well-trained driver who

knows the way and who can control the horses, and, above all, the master sitting in the chariot is constantly vigilant and majestically powerful to govern and rule his driver, so that the latter may not turn disobedient or conspire with the master's enemies to do him harm.

On the other hand, if the vehicle is not in proper condition, if the horses are old or untamed, even though vigorous, if the bridle is unfit and weak, if the driver is not wise but a careless fellow, and if the master sitting in the chariot is weak and incapable of giving proper direction, the journey may present innumerable difficulties; it may become dangerous and even disastrous. The exact *shlokas* in which the above similie has been mentioned are as follows:

atmānam rathinam viddhi sharīram rathameva tu,
buddhim tu sarsthim viddhi manaḥ pragrahameva cha.

Understand the individual soul as a traveller and master of the chariot, the body as the chariot, the intellect as the charioteer and the mind as the bridle.

indriyāṇi hayānāhurviṣhayāňsteṣhu gocharān,
atmendriyamanoyuktam bhoktetyāhurmanīshiṇaḥ.

Those who are endowed with discrimination compare the senses (or sense organs) with the horses of the chariot and the sense objects with the paths these horses take. They call the *Ātmā* that is identified with the body, the senses and the mind, the experiencer of the fruits of its *karmas*.

yas tv avijñānavān bhavaty ayuktena manasā sadā,
tasyendriyāṇy avashyāni duṣhṭāshvā iva sāratheḥ.

The senses of that intellect which, being ever associated with an uncontrolled mind, becomes devoid of discrimination, are unruly like the wild horses that do not obey the charioteer.

yas tu vijñānavān bhavati yuktena manasā sadā,
tasyendriyāṇi vashyāni sadashvā iva sāratheḥ.

But for one who is ever associated with a restrained mind and is endowed with discrimination, the senses are controllable like the well-trained horses of the charioteer.

yas tv avijñānavān bhavaty amanaskaḥ sadā shuchiḥ,
na sa tat padam āpnoti sansāram chādhigachçhati.

He who is associated with an undiscriminating intellect and an uncontrollable mind is ever impure and does not attain the goal; rather he wanders in the cycle of worldly phenomena.

yas tv aijñānavān bhavati samanaskaḥ sadā shuchiḥ,
sa tu tat padam āpnoti yasmād bhūyo na jāyate.

But he who is endowed with a discriminating intellect and a controlled mind is ever pure and attains the goal from which he is not born again.

vijñānasārathir yas tu manaḥpragrahavān naraḥ,
so 'dhvanaḥ pāram āpnoti tad viṣhṇoḥ paramam padam.

The man who has as his charioteer a discriminating intellect, and who has the reins of the mind under his control, attains the end of the road, the highest place of *Viṣhṇu.* (Kaṭha Upaniṣhad 1.3, 3-9)

Now, coming from the illustration to that which is illustrated, we see that this world is not our real home. The soul, having been separated since time immemorial from its Supreme Father, the Lord, is wandering around in this world-forest. To the *jīva* (the individual soul) who is very harassed and troubled by the beasts of fear, hatred, attachment, wrath, death and disease, which are at large in the world-forest, the Lord has given the vehicle of this body — as an instrumental means — equipped with the mind, senses and intellect, so that he may take the road to his real home, which is God. Once set out on the pilgrimage of God-Realization, he has to travel most of the way, though not the whole of it, with the help of this very body, mind, senses and intellect. It would naturally be easier for him, the *jīva*, to reach his destination if these instruments are sufficiently developed as well as controlled. Thus, the possession of a healthy body, control over the senses and mind, and the illumination of the thinking faculty become indispensable means for spiritual effort.

It is said quite correctly that mind is the cause of bondage and also the cause of freedom —"***mana eva manuṣhyāṇām kāraṇam bandhamokṣhayoḥ***." A purified, developed and controlled mind becomes a means of liberation, whereas an uncontrolled and undisciplined mind turns out to be the cause of bondage,

just as a man riding a horse is free when the horse is under his complete control, and not free if the horse is running fast uncontrollably.

Self-control, however, does not imply the suppressing or killing of the mind and senses; they must be regarded as useful servants, but dangerous masters.

Self-control denotes that capability of the soul whereby the body is consciously controlled, and the mind and senses are restrained from indulging in any such physical, sensory or mental activities as the higher intelligence or the inner conscience forbids, and whereby they are driven at will to perform such acts as are sanctioned by the inner conscience or higher intelligence. Thus, a self-controlled man is one who can withdraw, at his sweet will, his senses as well as his mind from any object or subject and fix them wheresoever he thinks it proper to do so.

Control of senses and control of mind are interdependent. It is through control of mind that complete control over the senses is possible; and control over the senses helps us in assuming proper control over the mind, because it is mostly through the senses that the mind gets out of control and wanders off. In the *Gītā* Lord Kṛishṇa says to Arjuna:

yatato hy api kaunteya purushasya vipashchitaḥ,
indriyāṇi pramāthīni haranti prasabham manaḥ.

Turbulent by nature, the senses of even a wise man, who is practising self-control, forcibly carry away his mind, Arjuna. (Gītā 2.60)

indriyāṇām hi charatām yan mano 'nuvidhīyate, tad asya harati prajñām vāyur nāvam ivāmbhasi.

When the wandering senses carry off the mind, they take away the intellect as well, just as a strong wind carries along a barge upon the waters. (Gītā 2.67)

Intellect stands above the senses and mind, and it has to control them, through enlightened reasoning and discrimination, to total restraint. The impressions in the mind that cause one to be infatuated with sensory objects are what are called mental knots, which cannot be untied without unceasing discrimination. Ordinarily, should a thread become tied in knots, the knots cannot be untied merely by force without the use of intelligence and right technique. If it is so with the knots of a thread, how can the complex mental knots be opened without the use of a sharp intellect?

Meditation on the true nature of the *Ātmā* renders great help in discovering and realizing the proper relationship that exists between the body, mind, senses and soul. Identify yourself with the true "I" and proclaim victory and freedom. Thou art the Spirit (*Ātmā*), Immortal and Eternal. Why should you, the Infinite Spirit, be a slave to the nose, eyes and ears? Don't put the cart before the horse. Be up and doing, and reverse

the current. In alliance with the intellect, launch a crusade against the tumultuous senses and mind, and come out victorious. It is through self-control alone that the day-to-day ordinary peace, and also the great peace that passes all understanding, can be found and made a permanent possession.

Selfless Work or Service in the Name of God

Selfless service is the service rendered quite spontaneously to one and all regardless of caste, creed or colour and without any motive behind it; or it is that type of service that is done in the name of the Lord, with the motive of pleasing Him for His sake alone. It is no less important a qualification for spiritual *sādhanā* than those mentioned earlier or than those which follow. In fact, all these qualifications, the ornaments of the soul, as we may call them, do not contradict one another; rather they complement one another.

In selfless service the desire for reward has no place, not the least; nor is it an act to be judged only by its appearance. It is not the physical aspect of the act, but the inner motive behind the act that counts. An action may be as insignificant as, say, that of dusting or sweeping, or as high as freely feeding or teaching the poor; it makes no difference from the spiritual point of view. The outward form or the visible result of an action does not count. Selfless service enriches the life of the

Spirit as much as meditation and spiritual concentration or worship of God.

As a matter of fact, selfless service cannot be performed without a good deal of contemplation. It is, in fact, founded on it. Through contemplation we receive what is eternal and timeless, and in the form of selfless service we perform what is regarded as virtuous in time. The expenditure, however, must balance the income. Without deep spiritual meditation, service does not become completely selfless because the ego lurks in the background and consequently one becomes desirous of reward.

He alone who is a serious spiritual contemplative-cum-*sevaka* can be a perfectly selfless worker. Through the regular practice of deep contemplation, he comes to realize deeply the fact that whatever he possesses —his body, mind and intellect—are tools of the Divine Cosmic Power. The entire universe is His free, spontaneous, and playful cosmic action. A devotee who is at once a witness of, and a participant in the cosmic play, is, as it were, a "conscious instrument" in the hands of the Lord. Putting all his energies in selfless service and rendering it in the name of God, he always believes, feels and says:

> ***tvayā hṛiṣhikesha hṛidi sthitena***
> ***yathā niyukto 'smi tathā karomi.***
>
> Seated in my heart, O Lord, in whatsoever
> way Thou driveth me, so am I driven.

This is not mere faith or sentimentalism. It is not merely mental belief or imagination, but a central and vital fact of spiritual intuition for a devotee who is wholly free from ego and who is full of the spirit of self-surrender. Through this direct experience, he feels most intensely that whatsoever the movements, internal or external, occurring in his whole personality, they are actually the action of the light and power of the indwelling Lord.

The ego, which sometimes overwhelms us as we perform some service (*seva*), can be overcome only through perpetual recollection and contemplation. By supplementing *sādhanā* with selfless service we heighten the capacity of meditation, and make the contemplative life more abundant and sweeter.

An action or service performed in the name of God and for the sake of God is actually devotion or *bhakti*. So the popular saying "Work is worship" is only a half-truth. Only the work or service done in the name of God is worship. Such service is really the deepest devotion, flowing out in the form of work. A truly devotional heart expresses itself through the eyes, the hands and the feet of a devotee.

Some people give a higher place to devotion and knowledge than to selfless service, taking it to be only a preparatory course. Even the great *achāryas*, the scholarly religious theologians, are found so preoccu-

pied with their theological systems that they are out for mutual denunciation — each one striving to exalt, through the display of his scriptural learning, his own viewpoint and denounce that of others. All this shows the narrowness of their vision. Devotion, knowledge and selfless service performed in the name of God are all equally valid, equally efficient and equally fruitful in the pursuit of God-Realization. There is no difference of the so-called superior or inferior means employed to realize God. The question which of them is easier or more difficult becomes unimportant when we know that individuals, possessing different capacities and capabilities in accordance with their psycho-physiological constitutions, are standing at different relative positions in the cosmic scheme. They approach the Lord from their respective positions.

Selfless service, in a way, is an avowed acknowledgement of the immanence of the Supreme Lord in the cosmos. The experience of God, who informs the world and yet transcends it, has to be accomplished not only in the timeless silent Self, but also in the comprehensive fullness of His world-manifestation. Without the immediate perception that "God is immanent in the whole world"—"***Īshāvāsyam idam sarvam yatkiñcha jagatyām jagat***," spiritual attainment cannot be regarded as complete (Īsha Upaniṣhad 1). In and through the integral Realization

of the Divine, who is both immanent in *Purușha-Prakṛiti*, *kșhara-akșhara* and in the passive and dynamic powers of Existence, and also beyond them, the concepts of knowledge, devotion and selfless service are properly reconciled.

Moreover, in the path of exclusive one-pointed contemplation there is the danger that the unemployed energies of the being, especially of the vital being, could be wasted. Why not sublimate the energies of the vital being and use them in the direction of spiritual unfoldment? And this can be done most appropriately through selfless work and service.

It must, however, be remembered that the work must proceed from the poise of Self and not from the seed of desire. Our actions must become more and more unselfish and detached. They should be free from ego and also free from the obsession of "I" and "mine." They must not be allowed to eclipse the inner light of the timeless Spirit. In brief, work you must, but let it not work you up.

Whatever action you do, do it for the pleasure of God, for the sake of God, without any regard for its accomplishment or non-accomplishment and without any expectation of receiving the fruits of your action. In the words of the *Gītā*:

yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgam tyaktvā dhanañjaya,
siddhyasiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvam yoga uchyate.

Established in *yoga*, O Arjuna, renouncing all attachments and maintaining equanimity in success and failure, perform all your actions. Maintaining equanimity of mind in accomplishment or non-accomplishment and renouncing the fruits of *karmas* (actions) is called *yoga*. (Gītā 2.48)

yat karoṣhi yad ashnāsi yaj juhoṣhi dadāsi yat,
yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣhva madarpaṇam.

Arjuna, whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as oblation to the sacred fire, whatever you give away to others as charity, whatever you do by way of penance, offer it all to Me. (Gītā 9.27)

Always serve, but serve selflessly. Serve the sick, the poor, the invalid and the needy with money, food, clothes and education, according to your capacity and with humility. God comes to you in the garb of the needy and the troubled; attend to Him in them.

Metaphysical Thinking

The purpose of metaphysical thinking is to investigate intellectually the fundamental nature of the world and God. It must be more hypothetical and less practical, because it has to deal with that which lies behind the apparent forms and is super-sensory.

What is the nature of this world and what are its laws? What are matter, life and mind and how are they

mutually related? Can there be anything like soul or Spirit? What is God? What is the relation between man and God, and between God and the world? What is the whence and whither of this life? Does this world go on mechanically, moved by the blind laws of insentient nature? Do things happen in this world by chance, or is there a secret Intelligence working behind the veil of forms? The investigation of all these problems falls within the field of metaphysical thinking.

There have been great teachers of humanity like Buddha and Christ, who have considered metaphysical thinking as a useless exercise for attaining peace and enlightenment. They would very much say that the heart is the seat of the soul. On the other hand, there have also lived great teachers like Shaṅkara and Socrates who have regarded the head as the dwelling place of the soul; they have encouraged metaphysical investigation as not only the most efficient but also the only method of attaining enlightenment. Who is to be followed? What is the value of metaphysical thinking in spiritual pursuit? Is it at all necessary for the spiritual aspirant to qualify himself or herself in metaphysical matters?

It is obvious that God cannot be made a victim of the intellect, howsoever high and penetrating it may

be. All the revealed scriptures, as also the spiritual adepts, declare with one voice that God cannot be seen through the senses and mind, because He is beyond them all. Realization of God is not a mental process. Direct spiritual experience is always supramental and super-sensory because the senses, mind and intellect have by no means the power to discover the Divine. We find at many places in the *Upanișhads* scattered hints confirming the veracity of this statement. Here, we will rest content with quoting only five couplets from the *Kena Upanișhad (1.5,6,7,8,9)*:

yadvāchānabyhuditam yena vāgabhyudhyate
tadeva brahma tvam viddhi nedam yadidamupāsate

The One who has not been expressed through speech but by whom speech is informed, take That to be *Brahma.* The one who can be expressed by speech and whom people worship is not *Brahma.*

yanmanasā na manute yenāhurmano matam
tadeva brahma tvam viddhi nedam yadidamupāsate

The One whom no one can know through the mind but by whose power the mind knows, take That to be *Brahma.* The one who is subject to the perception of the mind and whom people worship is not *Brahma.*

yacḥchakshușhā na pashyati yena chakșhūňșhi pashyati
tadeva brahma tvam viddhi nedam yadidamupāsate

The One whom no one can see through the eyes but by whose power the eyes see, take That to be *Brahma.*

The one who is subject to optical vision and whom people worship is not *Brahma.*

yachçhrotrena na shṛiṇoti yena shrotramindam shrutam tadeva brahma tvam viddhi nedam yadidamupāsate

The One whom no one can hear through the ears but by whose power the ears hear, take That to be *Brahma.* The one who is subject to hearing by the ears and whom people worship is not *Brahma.*

yatprāṇena na prāṇiti yena prāṇaḥ praṇīyate tadeva brahma tvam viddhi nedam yadidamupāsate

The One who is not moved by the *prāṇa* (vital force) but by whose power *prāṇa* is moved, take That to be *Brahma.* The one who can be moved by *prāṇa* and whom people worship is not *Brahma.*

It is clear, therefore, that the capability of metaphysical thinking is by no means an essential qualification without which the *sādhanā* of Self-Realization cannot be successfully completed. If the aspirant is sufficiently mortified, if he is not stubborn in holding to ready-made beliefs and prejudices, and if he is sufficiently sensitive to the inspiration and delicate touch of the Spirit, there can be no doubt that he will have the direct experience of the Lord seated within his heart as well as omnipresent in the entire world, even though he is not thoroughly acquainted with metaphysical matters. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it becomes easier for the spiritual aspirant to reach his destination

if he is not handicapped by false and shallow beliefs in the choice of the correct path. And towards that end, knowledge of metaphysics is a great help, indeed, but the indispensable condition is that one must not become so engrossed as to lose the practical aspect of spirituality.

Let it be remembered that true wisdom does not lie in learning various definitions of spiritual principles as given in philosophical and theological books. Through intensive and exhaustive study of the books on different systems of theology, or even through ever listening to scholarly discourses on spirituality, one's formal knowledge of theological terms is enriched, but it certainly does not help one to know the real Self, nor does it enable one to have even a single spiritual experience of a high order. If one considers oneself a *jñānī* merely by virtue of having learnt a number of definitions of the various aspects of spiritual reality —as that of the soul, providence, Godhead, Spirit and God—one really falls victim to self-delusion. Such a person, it is said, is only a *vāchaka jñānī* that is, one who talks too much about God in theological terms, but has no spiritual experience, nor even sincere aspiration for direct spiritual experience.

The question is, what do you aspire for? Do you aspire to learn the definition of Truth or do you aspire

to realize Truth? There is a lot of difference between having the experience or attainment of a thing and possessing the mere intellectual knowledge of that thing. The seeker of God should, therefore, be very careful that he or she does not become attached to dry philosophical and intellectual knowledge and lose sight of the goal of the direct perception of the Supreme. Mere philosophic discussions and polemic commentaries about Spirit or God are, in the eyes of the enlightened souls, entirely useless; it is really nothing more than mental gymnastics. As the ideal of having the first-hand experience of the Self and spiritual Fulfilment is the real goal, one should practise devotion, contemplation and even selfless service along with metaphysical studies.

The *bhakta* or the devotee gives his heart to God very cheerfully, but he is not ready to give his intellect; the *jñānī* gives his intellect to God very cheerfully, but he is not prepared to give his heart. Better to be perfectly sincere unto Him and offer Him both head and heart. Let us offer our hands as well, for it is best to make optimum use of all our energies towards God-Realization, namely the energy of knowledge (*jñāna shakti*), energy of feeling (*bhāva shakti*) and energy of action (*kriyā shakti*).

Self-Surrender

The purpose of all spiritual endeavour is to possess God and be possessed by Him, to be absolutely delivered from the yoke of time, and to attain that highest state where pure and Infinite Bliss, the eternally resplendent Light, Life and Unlimited Power saturate the Being, and where all ignorance, pain, death and darkness cease to exist forever. But this task is too arduous to be completed by any individual through unaided and limited self-effort. As the popular saying goes:

> ***aneka bandhana se bah̆dhayā eka bichārā jīva,***
> ***apane bala ch̩ūṭai nahīṅ ch̩oḍanahārā pīva.***
>
> The poor helpless soul is tied down by innumerable chains; it cannot free itself through self-effort alone without the help of the Beloved (God).

Moreover, self-effort, being a process within time, cannot by itself deliver us from time. Consequently, the direct intervention of the Supreme Lord in the temporal domain becomes an inevitable necessity for the achievement of real deliverance. And the Lord does not directly and supernormally intervene unless the individual unconditionally surrenders himself unto Him. Surrender, therefore, proves to be inevitable for complete emancipation. This seems to be the reason why even in the *raja yoga* of Patañjali, which mainly underlines self-effort, *Īshvara-praṇidhāna* or surrender

unto the Lord has been acknowledged as a primary condition for spiritual achievement.

Self-surrender means offering willingly and completely all that we have and all that we are to God. A piece of marble is placed in an artist's hands, and he makes it into a useful and beautiful thing; we place ourselves in the hands of God, and He transforms us into a useful instrument of His will and purpose, and as we receive His touch, we are set on the divine path — the path which ultimately leads us to Him. Surrender requires of us perfect trust in and full reliance upon God. One should be so full of faith that one joyfully exclaims, "I will trust in Thee, O Lord, even if Thou slayeth me," as is said in a *Vedic* hymn. But such a degree of faith and confidence in the Lord is not easy to achieve. Self-surrender cannot be achieved all at once in a day or two.

Self-surrender is a dynamic process. Slowly and steadily, as we advance in spiritual *sādhanā*, the virtue of surrender grows in us progressively. Our inner experience, which we have by going deep within, and the external events in which the Lord comes to our help, make our faith in Him more and more firm. Self-surrender is born of this very faith. Yet beware! On the pretext of self-surrender some people turn *tāmasic* and lethargic in the performance of spiritual *sādhanā*. "We will not do anything; let the Lord do everything

for us" — this attitude is quite against the spirit of true resignation. Such spiritually *tāmasic* people go on, one wonders to note, doing their best to grow more and more wealthy and to rise in the political, social, or economic hierarchy, as if God, who is all-powerful to give them salvation, is powerless to bring them such ordinary worldly things. All this only shows that they do not understand the true meaning of faith in the Lord. A truly faithful person would say, "I can do all things, not through human wisdom or human power, but through God."

A simple and obedient child moves about and acts, but all through there is the feeling hidden in the depths of his mind that his mother is there to protect him at any time, to show her love to him always. Similarly, the *sādhaka* who has surrendered himself unto Him, performs *sādhanā* and also fulfils the obligations of the world; he moves about and acts, but depends all through on the love and protection of the Lord. Such a man does everything not through ego, but through divine inspiration, or say, whatever activities, spiritual or otherwise, are performed by such a *sādhaka*, they are actually performed by the Divine Power. Raised to an exalted spiritual felicity, his whole life is transformed into a practical *yoga*, in which the world and God are totally reconciled and become essentially one. Consummately God-informed and God-filled, he lives in the Lord, moves in Him, breathes in Him and Him

alone. All this is due to perfect surrender, which dissolves his individual existence and unites him with the Divine, both in His essential Being and in His divine universal action. In *Rāmacharitamānasa*, the Lord Himself says:

sunu muni tohi kahauň saharosā,
bhajahiň je mohi taji sakala bharosā.
karauň sadā tinha kai rakhavārī,
jimi bālaka rākhai mahatārī.
gaha sisu bachçha anala ahi dhāī,
tahaň rākhai jananī aragāī.
prauḍha bhaeň tehi suta para mātā,
prīti karai nahiň pāchili bātā.
more prauḍhatanaya sama gyānī,
bālakasuta sama dāsa amānī.
janahi mora bala nija bala tāhī,
duhu kahaň kāma krodha ripu āhī.
yaha vichāri panḍita mohi bhajahīň,
pāehuň gyāna bhagati nahiň tajahīň.

Listen O sage (Nārada): I tell you with utmost emphasis that I always take care of those who devotedly remember Me with undivided faith, even as a mother tends to and guards her child. If an infant runs to grab hold of the fire or a snake, the mother draws it aside and rescues it. When her son has grown up, she loves him still, but not as before. The *jñānīs* (those following the path of knowledge) are like my grown up children, while the humble devotees

are like my infant children. A devotee depends on me while the *jñānī* depends on his own strength. But both have to face enemies like lust and anger. Pondering thus, the prudent ones adore Me and never forsake devotion even after attaining knowledge (*jñāna*).

(Shrī Rāmacharitamānasa, Araṇyakāṇḍa 42)

As a matter of fact, in the case of a seeker who has completely surrendered himself, all his actions and *sādhanā*, which appear to be done by him, are in fact done by the Lord Himself. As there no longer remains any difference between the *sādhanā* and day-to-day activities, his whole life is filled with spontaneous *sādhanā* and God. This is the glory of self-surrender alone.

When you regard nothing as your own, all things then love to be possessed by you. When you give up your claim to all power, the Unlimited Power of the Divine freely flows in you. Make your mind empty of worldly desires and have it filled with the love of God. The same power that becomes worldly desires is transformed into love for God upon the eradication of such desires. As soon as the darkness of delusion is dispelled, the perennial light of wisdom dawns within you. When there is no longer infatuation and attachment to the worldly things, situations and relationships, there bursts forth within you the fountain of Infinite Love, which is no different from God. Give yourself

to the Lord and the Lord gives Himself to you, as declared by Him in the *Gītā*:

> ***ye yathā mām prapadyante tāṅs tathaiva bhajāmy aham.***
>
> O Arjun, howsoever and in whatever way or sentiment men seek Me, I also approach them, or reveal Myself to them, and reciprocate their sentiment accordingly.
>
> (Gītā 4.11)

What, then, do you lose by self-surrender?

The more you resign yourself unto the Lord, the greater and higher will be the degree of action of the divine will and divine power in you. Inevitably so, for when an individual surrenders himself unto Him, the Unlimited Power of God works freely in him; he is transformed and set firmly on the path of spiritual evolution.

Perseverance

Spiritual Fulfilment usually does not come easily or quickly. A very long span of time, many births or even many aeons, may have to elapse in its attainment, although the ultimate spiritual experience may come instantaneously and within a short span of *sādhanā*. Experience of God very often does come at first suddenly, and quite unexpectedly. It may come by the direct grace of God Himself, or through the transforming touch of a perfect *yogī*, or else through a long and adequate spiritual *sādhanā*. But the experience,

which comes at first suddenly, is just a flash that passes away immediately and is therefore not permanent; it is not complete Realization; it is not spiritual Fulfilment.

God-Realization denotes the stabilisation of God-experience in all parts of the entire being, such as the physical body, senses, vital, mind, intellect, etc. Fulfilment denotes a permanent establishment in the state of Realization. Both Realization and Fulfilment require very strenuous and continuous spiritual effort. The *Gītā* declares:

> ***prayatnād yatamānas tu yogī sanshuddhakilviṣhaḥ,***
> ***anekajanmasansiddhas tato yāti parāṁ gatim.***
>
> The *yogī* who diligently and with perseverance takes up spiritual practice attains Perfection in this very life with the help of virtuous tendencies of many previous births, and being completely purified of all impurities, soon reaches the Supreme State.
>
> (Gītā 6.45)

To expect God-experience through the transforming touch of the *Guru*, or through an adept without any self-effort is only wishful thinking. In the first place, such great *yogīs* as can impart, solely through their own power, God-experience to the *sādhaka*, irrespective of the latter's competence, are very, very rare. Secondly, such rare saints keep away from publicity and do not ordinarily display their spiritual

powers. They never wish or try to make themselves marketable. As such, to find such rare *yogīs*, or to get blessed by their transmuting touch, even if they are sought and found, is not as easy a matter as it seems to be. Spiritual experience is not a thing that can be exchanged for silver or gold. There are teachers of *yoga* these days who seem to be out to commercialize God, *yoga* and religion. They claim they can transform an individual by a touch and make anyone realize God in a day or even in a minute; they are, in many cases, frauds. Let us, therefore, not sit idle and hope that some adept will someday meet us, or even come to us, and show us the spiritual light without our effort, self-discipline and regular practice of spiritual contemplation and meditation. Even for having a glimpse of God, one must strive hard and perform searching *sādhanā*.

The path of God-Realization, it has been said, is like a razor's edge: "***kṣhurasya dhārā nishitā duratyayā, durgama pathas tat kavayo vadanti***" (Kaṭha Upaniṣhad 1.3.14). The great mystic Kabir has likened spiritual effort to a fierce battle that most certainly needs more arduous discipline, greater skill, courage, patience and unbroken alertness than that required of an ordinary soldier on a battlefield. The spiritual soldier has to be very, very careful, vigilant as well as very active at each and every step. He has to choose every moment — choose between the passing and the Everlasting.

He has to examine minutely his interest, motive and attitude, time and again, and act very cautiously lest his work should become mechanical or merely a matter of routine; such mechanical effort is fruitless. A little indolence, slumber or carelessness on his part may prove spiritually dangerous enough and seal the fate of his or her ascent to the Divine. A little shift in your motive, and you fall immediately. Any bit of worldly interest that creeps in your heart does demote you from the spiritual status that you might have gained. Every worldly gain may not mean a spiritual loss, but every desire for worldly gain does mean a corresponding loss in the zeal for the Eternal. Cherish worldly pleasure, and lose the dynamic divine Bliss (*Ānanda*). A positive response from the *sādhaka* to the temptations of the flesh produces a negative reaction in relation to the call from the Divine. Why is it so? Goodness knows; but it is a fact. "Die and come to life" is the commanding divine rule.

Sādhanā is, however, not by any means smooth sailing all along. For the most part it is full of ups and downs. All along the way—especially in certain neutral conditions and dry intervals that intervene, and also in most trying and testing periods that interrupt at certain turns—steady perseverance is demanded from the *sādhaka*.

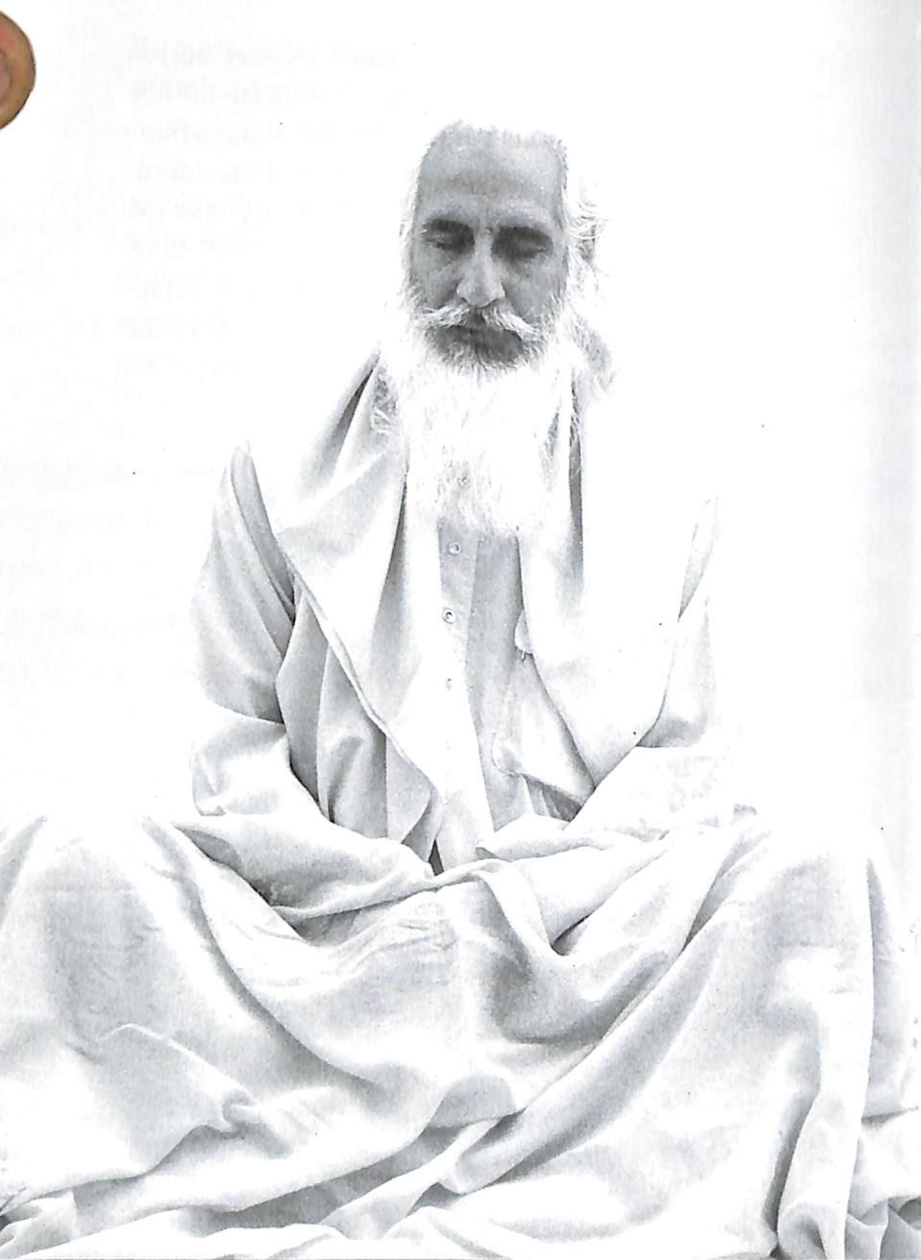
The *uttama sādhaka*, the elevated seeker, is always prompted to move on to the Divine with firm and un-

compromising determination, which exactly corresponds to the "do or die" concept. Obstacles do not threaten or exhaust him; nor can time discourage him. "Whether the experience of God and His Realization takes me a single moment, or whether it may take me innumerable births, I will not stop, come what may, unless I find Him." This is the proper spirit of perseverance and he alone who possesses it can find the Lord. In the words of the great sage Swami Rāma Tirtha:

> ***baiṭhe haiň tere dara pe, to kuçh kar ke uṭheňge,***
> ***yā vasla hī ho jāegā, yā mara ke uṭheňge.***
>
> Beloved! I am sitting at Thy door waiting for Thee, and I will not leave empty handed. Either my zeal for Thee consumes me, or I shall be blessed with Thy union.

Perseverance should not, however, be confounded with complacence. It requires one to carry on the spiritual task most resolutely and patiently, despite all the difficulties, depressions and dangers of the journey.

Om Om Om



CHAPTER FOUR

Spiritual Contemplation and Meditation

"Spiritual concentration implies the gathering together of all the dispersed powers and capacities of the being and focusing them on the Divine for the sole purpose of realizing Him first-hand."



Spiritual Contemplation and Meditation

Having briefly discussed the importance of moral and mental requisites for complete spiritual unfoldment, we now come to the main subject of spiritual contemplation — a subject of great significance — the purpose of which is to take us beyond the mind to the direct supramental vision of the Divine. The process of perfect contemplation leads us to a strainless and stressless relaxation in the divine Spirit or to an effortless absorption in the Seer which shines in Its pure light in the deep silence, where the mental activities of thinking, willing, knowing and feeling do not exist at all. This state, attainable through contemplation, has been termed *nirvikalpa samādhi* or *nirguṇa sthiti* and has been referred to in the following *shlokas*:

> ***tadā drașhțuḥ svarūpe 'vasthānam.***
> The Seer, then, is said to be established in Itself.
> (Yoga Sūtrās of Patañjali 1.3)

yadā pañchāvatiṣhṭhante jñānāni manasā saha,
buddhishcha na vicheṣhṭati tām āhuḥ paramām gatim.

When the fives senses of perception, together with the mind, come to rest in the *Ātmā* (Spirit) and the intellect also does not function, that is said to be the highest state.[1] (Kaṭha Upaniṣhad 2.3.10)

Pure spiritual experience cannot be achieved except through non-polar and contentless spiritual concentration through the contraction of the polar triangle of experience, that is, the triangle of the knower, the knowing and the known, into the "point" that ultimately dissolves in the boundless ether of Consciousness. This state is the highest possible spiritual experience that can be achieved through contemplation by self-effort. What happens next — a wider and greater opening of Consciousness — is wrought by the Lord, according to His free Will, only in the *sādhaka* who does not rest content with the achievement of non-polar contemplation in the Seer, taking it to be the highest or the final attainment, but who keeps himself open and docile, through self-surrender, unto the Supreme Lord.

Theory is not practice and words are not the things for which they stand. The word "God," after all, does not tell us what God is. It is not possible to describe

[1] This *shloka* refers to the highest state of Realization of the *Nirguṇa* aspect of the Divine.

exactly the state of Consciousness (the state entailing the establishment of the attributeless Seer, *Nirguṇa*, in Itself) as hinted before, even though we may try to use the most exact and graphic words for this purpose. Therefore, whatever be the spiritual wideness and felicity of this state, we leave it for the reader to experience it himself in his soul through proper and prescribed practice.

What does spiritual concentration mean and what is its practical method or technique? Spiritual concentration implies the gathering together of all the dispersed powers and capacities of the being and focusing them on the Divine for the sole purpose of realizing Him first-hand.

All the methods of spiritual concentration may be classified into mainly two groups: the positive and the negative. Each of these two methods involves two inner movements — the passive and the active — to be followed simultaneously. In terms of the positive method, these two movements can be summed up as "fixing" and "watching." With regard to the negative method, it can be described as "stopping" or "rejecting" and "watching." In other words, in the practice of both methods, consciousness has to be divided, as it were, into two parts — the passive and the active, the active part doing something, and the passive element doing nothing but vigilantly observing the work being

performed by the active part. Let these two methods be made clear.

I. The Negative Method

The negative method of spiritual concentration is quite simple to understand. All kinds of emotions, moods and ideas that arise from within, or the impacts of thoughts and suggestions that come from without or from the universal mind, are to be rejected or discarded as soon as they arise or come. Simultaneously, it is to be keenly observed that this "stopping" or "rejecting" is going on uninterruptedly and that the active part has not become engaged in thinking, willing or feeling something other than mere "stopping" or "rejecting."

Slowly and gradually, as this practice progresses, the attacks from within or without begin to grow milder and ultimately they are reduced to nil. In the final step, even this practice of discarding and rejecting is also to be cast off. Thus, a point of unforced concentration is reached where all the activities of the mind are annihilated, all its modifications stopped and only Awareness shines in its pristine purity. The Seer, then, is said to be established in Itself — there being no inner or outer object left before It, not even blankness of mind or the state of deep sleep. This is a state of peace and nothing but peace; there is no feeling of

pain or pleasure, but tranquillity reigns supreme. The Self or *Ātmā* is experienced in this state in its pure Nature — Eternal, existing in its own right, not depending upon mind for awareness, free from all pairs of opposites because they are no longer there, inactive because all activity that caused the *Puruṣha* to be identified with it has ceased, relationless — the unmoved and immovable *Ātmā.* This experience, it may be told here in passing, is not the only experience, nor even the highest, in the realm of spiritual experiences.

II. The Positive Method

As for the positive method of concentration, in which "fixing" is to be practised, it may be asked, "On what object should the mind be fixed? How can we fix our mind on the Divine whom we have not yet seen or whom we do not know and who is said to have no name or form?" Some argue that the Infinite cannot be confined to a particular name or a particular form. Some people even call meditation on God through an image or form idolatry. We must remember that God is Infinite and thus nothing can be excluded from Him. He is all inclusive and He has many aspects. In His *Nirguṇa* aspect, spoken of in the negative method, He is without any attribute, any name, or any form and is pure Consciousness, the passive silent Self, the Seer. But in His *Saguṇa* aspect, He Himself manifests in

the form of this world phenomenon, and therefore all names, all forms and all ideas belong to Him. This being so, any name, any form, any idea can be made a means to remember Him or meditate upon Him.

As previously stated, the Supreme Lord is immanent in the cosmos and yet He transcends it at the same time. Therefore the integral Realization of the Divine has to be achieved not only in the timeless silent Self, but also in the comprehensive fullness of His world manifestation.

Now it should be clear that for some aspirants, seeking and meditating upon God through any finite symbol including an image or form is not idolatry but a practical necessity to think of the Unthinkable.

Yes, some divine symbols or images are necessary to be resorted to, according to this method, in order to lend support to the mind. For concentration, everyone has to make use of some image, in one way or another. The practice of "fixing" is not possible without it. These symbols or images can be placed under the three categories of form, name and idea (including feeling).

This positive method of "fixing" is comparatively easier than the negative method of "rejecting" or "stopping." The import of this statement can be understood from the analogy of a spider. The spider

which comes down by means of a thread it has projected out of itself, goes back up to its place through that very thread and then absorbs the thread within itself. Similarly, the individual, who from the state of his essential peace and poise has been externalized through idea, name and form, can most easily return to his or her essential state with the help of these very things. This apart, the mind of man is, in its day-to-day affairs, always occupied with the world of name, form and ideas, and it is not all at once possible or practicable to rid the mind of these things. The proper way is to practise fixing the mind on one form, name or idea, which in the final plunge of contemplation drops away by itself, revealing that of which it is the symbol.

It is important for the aspirant to believe that the support selected for contemplation, whether it be a form, name or idea, is symbolic of the ultimate, infinite and eternal Reality. In this way the finite symbol becomes a means of realizing the Infinite Lord in all His innumerable dimensions. However, if an aspirant takes the symbol to be representative merely of one particular aspect of the Divine, the highest spiritual experience attained through this method will be limited to that particular aspect.

Divine Form as the Support

In this method of concentration on form, an object with a form, such as the sun, moon, fire, sky, etc., or the divine form of one's personal deity (*Iṣhṭa*), a saint, prophet or incarnation of God, is chosen as a support for the mind for contemplation. For one who is of a devotional temperament, the concentration on the form of his or her *Iṣhṭa* is easier to achieve; it brings fruitful results because the *Iṣhṭa* himself helps the devotee in that case and looks after him. Others who do not have sufficient faith and devotion may choose the sun, the moon or any other object, preferably a luminous one, as a support for the mind. Thus, the chosen object is visualized within, and one practises to hold the mind steadily on that object for longer and longer periods. The proper centre or place within the body where the image has to be visualized and held is the point between the eyebrows, the centre of command, technically called the *ājñā chakra* in *yogic* terminology.

Divine Name as the Support (*Japa*)

The second type of support that can be given to the mind for concentration is that of a name or word. Let us consider this now. This support may be in the form of one name or in the form of any *mantra*. The *mantra* is a phrase or formula bearing a certain meaning

that affirms the existence of God and embodies a certain idea or feeling in relation to God, such as surrender unto the Lord or the feeling of the divine presence, or it may inspire devotion with a certain prayer raised unto the Lord. Any one name of God or *mantra* or phrase is selected according to one's faith and conviction. It is to be mentally or vocally chanted; it is to be repeated gently and calmly. Gradually, consciousness is centred on the hearing of this name or *mantra*. This practice is called *japa*. Science may not prove it today, logic may also fail to do so, but experience has proved that such intonation and repetition of God's name has a marvellous effect in tuning the mind with God — the Spirit that is all and beyond all.

There is tremendous power in the name of the Lord. The Lord's grace does descend through His name on one who faithfully and wholeheartedly repeats it. This is a fact confirmed and reconfirmed by the saints of all religions.

The proper place for concentration on the Lord's name or on a *mantra* is the heart-centre, which corresponds to the *anāhata chakra*, as termed in *yogic* parlance. Let it be pointed out here that the shorter the *mantra* or word, the better it is, because it becomes easier to concentrate on.

The *japa* of any name of God or *mantra* can also be practised by connecting that name or *mantra* with the rhythmic incoming and outgoing of breath and by chanting it mentally. But in this practice, the attention of the mind should not be focused (in the process of chanting the word or *mantra*) on the navel-centre (*maṇipura chakra*) because through this practice the vital being becomes highly active, which might cause a severe agitation or sudden explosion of the *prāṇic* force. If the discriminating power in the *sādhaka* is not sufficiently developed, if he does not possess complete mastery over his senses and mind, and if, above all, he is not single mindedly devoted to the ideal of God-Realization, the violent awakening of the *prāṇic* force may lead him astray in his *sādhanā* and, consequently, throw him into the abyss of sin and sorrow. Unless the centre of command (*ājñā chakra*) and the heart-centre (*anāhata chakra*) of the aspirant have been adequately purified, and unless they have assumed full control over the navel-centre, it is not proper for a man to practise *japa* with the incoming and outgoing of breath by fixing the mind on the navel-centre. This practice should not be performed by everyone. If a practitioner wants to do *japa* by associating it with the incoming and outgoing of breath, then he or she should keep the attention at the heart-centre, i.e. *anāhata chakra*. There is no danger in doing this.

The practice of *japa* can lead, even if performed to the exclusion of all the other methods of concentration, to the highest spiritual experience. In fact, in its advanced stage, the *japa* itself turns into a deep and dynamic spiritual concentration. As such, by becoming a dynamic concentration, it brings about an extraordinary transformation in the external life of that *sādhaka* who practises it regularly and sincerely. This is the real reason why, as verified by religious history, even many bad characters who took to *japa* were transmuted into great saints. *Japa*, or the chanting of the Lord's name, is an exercise divine and spiritually rewarding indeed. There have been many saints who devoted themselves to this method of spiritual concentration alone and to none other, and realized the Lord.

Divine Idea or Feeling as the Support

The third kind of support or *avalambana* that can be given to the mind for concentration in order to realize God, is a single idea or a single feeling. This idea or feeling must, in one way or another, be related to God. Some selected ideas or feelings, from which only one may be beneficially used at a time for spiritual contemplation, are laid down as follows:

i. God is the only existence or the only power, and all else is naught.

ii. I am the Spirit beyond the body, senses and mind, untouched by them — the Everlasting, the Ever-pure, the Ever-free.

iii. The whole world is a manifestation of God and is sustained by Him.

iv. I take refuge in Him, the Lord Supreme.

v. I offer my profound thanks a thousand times unto Him who is the Lord, omniscient, all-powerful and a living embodiment of unlimited compassion.

vi. The Divine is a boundless sea of peace, in which I am sinking. Peace on my left, peace on my right, peace ahead and peace behind, peace below and peace above. In the Divine I am all peace.

Of the above-mentioned ideas and feelings, or among such others, one feeling or one idea, which accords most with one's religious or spiritual faith and conviction, is chosen and used for "fixation." This chosen idea or feeling is upheld in the mind, to the exclusion of all the rest, and contemplated upon continuously. If this idea or feeling is devotional, the proper place for concentration is the *anāhata chakra*; but if it is predominantly intellectual or metaphysical, the proper place for concentration is the *ājñā chakra*.

III. The Witnessing Method

Apart from the above-mentioned methods — the positive and the negative — there is also a third method in which neither "fixing" nor "rejecting" is practised, but one has to step aside from all thoughts, taking them to be a part of nature and not of the Self, and thus, one has simply to watch them as a witness. The thoughts thus arise and subside unheeded and unidentified with the *Puruṣha*, who observes them, as it were, from above — as if a person standing on a mountaintop is looking disinterestedly and neutrally at the things below, remaining unaffected by them. In this method of "watching," the mind may go on thinking mechanically for some time, but having lost its conscious centre of support, ultimately becomes silent and passive, though remaining vigilant at the same time. Thus, a state of alert-passivity is reached. It is in this state of deep silence that the true nature of *Puruṣha* is revealed. However, it should be remembered that this is not the highest state or spiritual experience. In the highest state, the seeker is established in the fulfilling integral Realization of the Lord, the Supreme Reality, in His wholeness.

All of these three methods are the most efficient ones, which still the mind and lead one to supramental and spiritual vision. Of course, they are difficult,

for an extrovert or a lazy person especially, and need long and sincere striving for sure success. This practice should be performed not coldly or indifferently, as if to fulfil an obligation, but with a burning sense of respect and love:

sa tu dīrghakālanairantaryasatkārāsevito dṛiḍhabhūmiḥ.

The spiritual practice becomes firmly rooted when it is performed with a sense of reverence and devotion for a long period without interruption.

(Yoga Sūtrās of Patañjali 1.14)

Meditation

There is a difference between contemplation and meditation. In the former, the mind is to be arrested on a single object or idea; in the latter, the mind is to be concentrated on a train of correlated ideas pointing to a common subject. The former implies the riveting of the mind on a particular object or idea; the latter implies the flowing of the mind on a set of thoughts which are interwoven, but which work out a single subject. To contemplate upon the one conclusive idea, "I am *Brahma*, the Absolute"—"***aham brahmāsmi***," is called *nididhyāsana* in *Vedāntic* parlance, while meditation denotes sequential thinking. For example, some elevating scene from the life of an *avatāra*, or even from the life of a great saint or prophet, or else some other subject, say, the transient nature of the worldly objects,

situations and relationships, or the immortality of the *Ātmā*, may be put before the mind as the subject matter for meditation. A subject thus selected is thought over so absorbingly by the mind that the external world is totally forgotten. It is clear enough that the process of meditation is easier than that of contemplation. As a matter of fact, meditation is the first stage of concentration and it leads to the second stage, called contemplation.

The Practice of the Various Methods of Contemplation

You wish to learn swimming. With that purpose you read books on the subject, listen to lectures on swimming and thus you become capable of knowing and understanding all its techniques. But would this much effort alone make you a swimmer? Would mere intellectual knowledge of the methods of swimming enable you to swim? The answer to this will certainly be a blank "no." In order to learn the art of swimming, you have to get into the water and exert your arms and legs. The instructions about, and the knowledge of any method can help make it easier for you to learn only when you put it into practice and gain experience. Similar is the case with contemplation and meditation, for which you must utilize all the energies and powers

at your disposal, i.e. intellectual power, emotional power and the power of action, to acquire complete control over your tumultuous mind. To this end, a few practices for contemplation and meditation are given below:

Preparation and Prayer – Make yourself physically clean through a bath or through washing your hands, feet and face. Sit down in a comfortable *āsana* (posture). Take care to keep the spinal column, neck and head in a straight position. It would be better if you sit cross-legged on a level but slightly raised platform, preferably a wooden plank. If for any reason you cannot sit cross-legged, sit on a chair but sit in an erect position so that the spine and the head do not lean in any direction. Close your eyes and collect your consciousness at the heart-centre. Adore and pray gently and softly to the Lord for about ten minutes. For doing this, choose an appropriate verse (the meaning of the verse must be clear to you) from a revealed scripture, or a devotional song composed by an inspired saint, which uplifts your mind and makes you humble and docile. Chant this verse gently, mentally or vocally, but in a low, sweet, gentle and rhythmic voice. Try to feel intensely what you utter. A short and simple prayer is given near the end of this book. After completing the prayer, practise simple *prāṇayāma* or conscious deep breathing. For the

method of practising *prāṇayāma* see the section "The Aids to Contemplation" of this book.

The Practice of the Negative Method – After finishing *prāṇayāma*, stop thinking. Try to centralize your consciousness at the heart-centre. Watch the blankness of your mind vigilantly, and don't let any idea or image enter it. If any thought enters, throw it out at once before it occupies your mind and makes it wander. Reject all external impacts and suggestions as well as the inner rising up of thoughts in the form of old, forgotten things as soon as you feel them rising. Often, at first, you lose your watchfulness after a short time and the mind wanders away without this wandering being noticed. Then suddenly you awake to the fact that your mind has been engaged in wandering somewhere, or in thinking something. Here, the secret to be grasped is that you do not experience any such feeling as would make you say, "My mind *is* wandering." What you actually experience is, "My mind *was* wandering," which you suddenly come to know at the time when you stop identifying yourself with the mind, and as an alert witness, you observe it keenly. It means that the mind wanders then and then alone when, completely identified with it, you lose your alertness and cease to be a watching observer. This being so, you should not be disheartened in the beginning of this practice if you feel your mind is slipping away. Be more and more

watchful and vigilant, and go on "rejecting" and "stopping." Slowly and gradually, as the practice matures, the mind becomes completely empty and imageless, reflecting nothing but the essential peace and pristine purity of the indwelling Spirit.

The Practice Using Divine Form as the Support– Clean yourself, sit in an *āsana* and pray unto the Lord as directed above. Conduct *prāṇayāma* if it suits you, or do simple conscious deep breathing for five to ten minutes. Close your eyes and collect your consciousness at the spot between the eyebrows, that is, on the *ājñā chakra*. Hold your mind on the imagined form of your *Iṣhṭa*, your personal beloved form of God, or imagine there some form of *jyoti* or light to which your mind is most attracted, with your whole attention fixed on it. Don't attend to any other appearance except that of your *Iṣhṭa*, but hold fast to the cherished one:

> ***yato yato nishchalati manashchañchalam asthiram,***
> ***tatas tato niyamyaitad ātmanyeva vasham nayet.***
>
> Drawing back the restless and fidgety mind from all those objects after which it runs, the seeker should repeatedly fix it on God. (Gītā 6.26)

As the practice progresses, the divine image of one's *Iṣhṭa* should become stabilized in one's mind for longer and longer periods at the *ājñā chakra*. When one reaches the stage in which the divine image re-

mains in one's mind for about two hours continuously, then there is a technique to transcend that stage and enter into *nirvikalpa samādhi*. Normally, when the seeker is fit to enter *nirvikalpa samādhi*, the *Iṣhṭa* itself withdraws its form and leads the devotee into *nirvikalpa samādhi*. In that case, the technique to transcend the divine form is not required.

In some special cases, however, there arises the need to use that technique, as follows. When, after continuous practice, the mind is well trained in staying on one object for a considerable period, there are then two things — the Seer and the seen — both standing still face to face with each other and shining quite distinctively. When this stage is reached, the next step is to identify with the Seer, or to say, one should think and feel that the Seer is one's real Nature. This will lead to the merger of the object in the Seer, which alone remains ultimately.

In this method of practice, the object of contemplation sometimes disappears, especially when it is about to stabilize before the practitioner, leaving behind a flash of light, which is intermittent. Sometimes there are flashes of different colours that come alternately, but these things are not to be entertained. The cherished object of contemplation has to be imagined again and again and retained in the stillness of mind.

The Practice Using Divine Name as the Support (*Japa*) – Sit cross-legged and pray adoringly as described above. Choose a name of God or a *mantra*, according to your faith, that you like most. It would be much better if you have obtained the name or *mantra* from a God-Realized or advanced saint, with the proper rules and regulations of initiation and with instructions, because such a name or *mantra* is then already sufficiently charged and is easier to be perfected. Close your eyes and mentally repeat the name or the *mantra* at the heart-centre. Do not let this repetition become mechanical. Let one part of your consciousness be simultaneously engaged in hearing the name or *mantra* that is being chanted mentally. This will enable you to hear the *mantra* and thus your mind will not be diverted. When the mind wanders, the mental hearing of the *mantra* will stop and this will awaken you immediately to the fact that your mind has wandered away and you can at once bring it back and refix it on the cherished object of contemplation. Thus the way of simultaneously hearing the name or *mantra* while chanting it helps you significantly in the process of concentration. This technique should be used only when sitting in one posture and exclusively practising *japa*.

The other method of practising *japa* is to deeply feel the meaning of the *mantra* which is being repeated mentally. This method involves devotion and is a

means of remembering the Divine. It may be practised while sitting silently in one posture or also during day-to-day activities. In this practice, one should repeat the *mantra* sweetly in the language of love and higher emotions. But if a seeker cannot fix his mind spontaneously on the meaning of the *mantra* and be absorbed in it, it is better to hear it mentally while reciting as advised above. At least one hour must be devoted daily to the practice of *japa*.

After sincere and unbroken practice for a few months, performed with total faith and concentration, the power of the *mantra* begins to manifest itself and the mind, fascinated by the divine vibrations of the *mantra*, is automatically diverted to the heart-centre. Then follow the spiritual experiences. The divine power embodied in the *mantra* holds you now, as it were, by the hand and takes you smoothly and safely, as the practice grows, to the higher planes in the spiritual realm, leading you ultimately to the highest summit from where there is no path ahead.

The Practice Using Divine Idea or Feeling as the Support – Be seated in an *āsana* and pray to the Lord as described above. After practising conscious deep breathing or *prāṇayāma* for five to ten minutes, choose a subject which appeals to you most in relation to God — such as liberation, the relation between God and the world, or the relation between the world and *jīva*,

the nature of God, or any such subject — and think over it so absorbingly that the outer world is totally forgotten. The transience and decay of all worldly things and states is also very useful as a subject for meditation, because it helps us to wean ourselves from temporal affections. Gradually, as the mind becomes more and more concentrated, the succession of correlated thoughts culminates in a single idea or feeling related to the Divine, which is upheld in the mind to the exclusion of all other thoughts and ideas and is concentrated upon so deeply that it begins to permeate one's entire being.

If one is more attracted to an intellectual idea, such as "I am the Spirit beyond the body, senses and mind — untouched by them, the everlasting, the ever-pure, the ever-free," then the attention should be focused on the *ājñā chakra*, between the eyebrows. This method of concentrating on one divine idea, when practised with dedication and regularity over a long period of time, eventually leads one to the state of *savikalpa samādhi*, in which one becomes completely unconscious of the physical body. In this state the intellectual knowledge embodied in that one divine idea is transformed into inner experience. However, in this type of *samādhi* the trinity of the knower, the known and the knowing persists.

Alternatively, one may choose to concentrate on a devotional feeling, such as that of taking refuge in or offering one's heartfelt gratitude to God, in which case the attention should be focused on the heart-centre. By the practice of concentrating on one feeling, that feeling becomes deeper and deeper and one becomes so fully absorbed that all objects, outer or inner, are obliterated, and one enters into a *samādhi* called *bhāva samādhi*. The next stage is called *mahābhāva samādhi*, in which even the physical body becomes transformed. In the state of *mahābhāva samādhi* all the cells of the body become completely saturated and charged with that one divine feeling.

The Practice of the Witnessing Method – Be seated in an *āsana* and pray as above. Close your eyes and stop thinking. Stop doing anything whatsoever. Don't fight with your thoughts. Remaining a witness, simply watch them while keeping your attention at the heart-centre. Neither invite the thoughts, nor reject them, nor suppress them. Let them come and pass away; let them arise and subside. Watch them impersonally, as you sometimes look at the flying birds coming and going in the sky. Don't participate in the coming and going of thoughts by becoming identified with them or by cooperating with them; just take notice of them and ignore them very lightly and gently. After a regular

daily practice of some months, the thoughts begin to subside, and finally both their appearance and disappearance stops, and Consciousness is established in a state of deep tranquillity and peace. This practice ultimately leads to the establishment in the passive, inactive Seer, the Pure Consciousness.

One may practise witnessing during day-to-day activities as well. In the beginning one should try to be the disinterested witness of those activities which don't require much mental attention, such as walking or eating. The attitude should be, "Walking or eating is happening," rather than, "I am walking or eating." Gradually, as one grows in witness consciousness, the practice of witnessing may be extended to even more complex activities and interactions requiring greater attention. This will not only deepen and support one's meditation, but also help the seeker to disidentify with the body-mind complex and different situations during daily affairs.

In short, prayer and spiritual contemplation are to spiritual health what food and physical exercise are to physical health. One desirous of leading the life of the Spirit must devote some time daily to prayer, *japa* and contemplation. How can he who cannot spare a few hours everyday to withdraw his mind from worldly affairs, in order to think exclusively of God, hope to find the Lord?

A Few Dangers

It will not be out of place to mention here some dangers, which the overeager aspirant must guard against. The normal course of the mind is to run after the objective world; but spiritual concentration, as already explained, implies just the reverse movement of the mind. This being so, the beginner who tries concentration all at once for a long period, especially on the *ājñā chakra*, may feel a strain on his brain. It happens on account of the tension produced by the inward movement of the beginner's mind. This movement is connected with the functioning of the brain. If the practitioner works beyond his capacity and makes violent efforts in fixing the mind in the middle of the eyebrows, he then runs the risk of damaging the nerve cells of his brain. Acute headache and dullness in the brain, a prolonged cooling sensation in the middle of the eyebrows, and excessive heat or intense irritation in the forehead are the signals of this danger.

Besides, many aspirants are not aware of the turns in the "spiritual track," the turns at which more expedient and hard work is needed. Such *sādhakas* go too fast in the beginning and work beyond their capacity. The result is that they generally get tired and exhausted quickly and they give up their *sādhanā*

midway. An example from sports will make this point clear. The "spiritual race" is not to be run too fast, at the highest speed, the entire distance; it is to be run as a marathon, steadily, with measured steps, so that the runner preserves his stamina until he takes the last step to victory.

To avoid these perils, the aspirant should start the practice of concentration for only a few minutes in the beginning, and then he should increase the duration slowly. As the scriptures exhort, "***shanaiḥ shanair uparamed buddhyā dhṛitigṛihītayā***"—"The seeker should, through gradual practice, attain tranquillity" (Gītā 6.25). If the brain gets fatigued and a headache occurs during contemplation, stop the exercise at that very time and let the mind relax. Repeat calmly the Lord's name or simply entertain in your mind the attribute of the Lord's benign sweetness. Start the *sādhanā* again when you regain mental equipoise and physical fitness.

The spiritual journey is not a journey of days or months, but of years. Who knows, it may take lives and lives to reach the final destination. Therefore, do not be impatient. Work steadily and calmly. Not a rash, but a regular and steady practice is needed to ensure success.

Here it also seems necessary to warn the student of *yoga* about another important point. Some students

of contemplation keep on changing their method of spiritual concentration. Taking to a certain method of concentration, they start the *yogic* practice, but if their mind does not become completely steady and restful through it within a period of a few days or months, they abandon that method and take to another method. After practising the second method for some time, they feel no improvement. They give up that too and then try a third one. Then the third method also yields no result. They are prompted to adopt yet another method, and so on and so on. This frequent changing of the method of practice — like changing one's clothes too often — is really a great mistake. Think of a man trying to dig a well, changing the site again and again, and therefore not being able to find water anywhere. Similarly, by changing the method of the practice of concentration again and again, the inward flowing of the mind can never be accomplished, nor can one-pointedness be achieved. Such an aspirant, therefore, fails to gain from any of the methods any substantial spiritual experience, and thus either turns indifferent to *sādhanā*, or becomes a sceptic or an infidel towards spirituality.

Generally speaking, the method of *sādhanā* is changed due to some difficulties that come in the way. When the *sādhaka* experiences difficulties in achieving concentration through one method, he is tempted to follow a second method. He thinks that the new method

will entail less arduous work. Captivated with this type of thinking, the student gives up the first method and gets engaged in the practice of a second. No doubt, this new method seems to be simple and easy to practise in the beginning because it is the nature of the mind to be attracted by novelties, but after some period, the *sādhaka* begins to feel the same difficulty in this method as he felt in the previous one. Then the allurement of a third method invades his mind, and he abandons the second one and takes to the third. This process goes on. Because of this fickleness of mind, success is not achieved, and the student is prevented from achieving inner spiritual concentration. He reaps no spiritual benefit.

It is, therefore, correct to say that a sufficiently long practice is required, and difficulties have to be faced in every method for achieving inner concentration. As such, the *sādhaka* should not change the way of his practice again and again. He must stick to one method and follow it wholeheartedly. He should know that to turn the mind inward and to assume full control of it is not an easy job. If you read the history of man carefully, you will notice how the mind has duped intellectuals, scholars, teachers and even ascetics and made them dance according to its impulses. Many notable warriors, who dominated and ruled vast territories, proved too powerless to conquer their own

minds. Even the great warrior Arjuna, though he was dutiful and pious, was compelled to remark:

> ***chañchalam hi manaḥ kṛiṣhṇa pramāthi balavaddṛiḍham,***
> ***tasyāham nigraham manye vāyor iva suduṣhkaram.***
>
> O Kṛiṣhṇa, the mind is very unsteady, turbulent, tenacious and powerful; therefore, I consider it as difficult to control as the wind. (Gītā 6.34)

This does not, however, imply that the mind cannot be turned inward, made one-pointed and controlled. Through "holy indifference" and the long, regular practice of contemplation, it can most certainly be brought under perfect control. In the *Gītā*, Lord Kṛiṣhṇa too assures us of this fact:

> ***asanshayam mahābāho mano durnigraham chalam,***
> ***abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa cha gṛihyate.***
>
> The mind is restless no doubt, and difficult to restrain, O Arjuna, son of Kunti; but it can be brought under control by repeated practice (of contemplation) and by the exercise of dispassion. (Gītā 6.35)

It is, therefore, not wise to alter, time and again, the method of practice of contemplation one adopts to turn the mind inwards.

Among the methods of spiritual concentration suggested in the preceding pages, the *sādhaka* should choose, according to his or her individuality, or according to the directions given by his or her spiritual

Master, one method and should follow it with unabated zeal until success is achieved. However, spiritual *sādhanā* may be comprised of only one method, or it may include more than one method. In the latter case, one method will be the dominant part of the spiritual practice, according to the individuality of the seeker, and it may be supplemented with other methods as well. This will make the *sādhanā* integral. But different methods should be practiced at different times and not in the same sitting. *Japa* should, of course, be performed daily, because through it, the grace of the Lord is found to descend sooner and unfailingly.

Om Om Om

CHAPTER FIVE

Main Obstacles and Aids to Contemplation

"By disciplined living, together with detachment and other moral qualities, as also with regular practice of contemplation, the mind can certainly be made one-pointed. Sincere effort, rightly guided, does bring success in the long run."



Main Obstacles and Aids to Contemplation

There are certain factors that hinder inner concentration and there are others that help and promote it. The most prominent of these are given below, in the hope that adequate knowledge of them will help the *sādhaka* to progress in contemplation.

Obstacles

Wandering of Mind

Wandering is a common disease of mind. Like a monkey who tirelessly goes on jumping from one branch of a tree to another or from one tree to another, the mind of an ordinary man keeps on oscillating and moving. Purposefully or purposelessly, it runs from one idea to another, from one place to another, and from one object to another, finding no rest anywhere. Unlike physical diseases, which either come to or leave the body at a certain stage, this disease of mind afflicts

man from his very birth and accompanies him till he breathes no more. Is there any cure for this disease? Yes, for every disease there is a cure. This disease, too, is not at all incurable. Though it is hard to stop the restlessness of the mind, it is not at all impracticable to do so. Have there not been saints and holy men who have proved to the world that the mind is not uncontrollable? Don't such self-controlled people, though few in number they may be, still happen to be amongst us?

By disciplined living, together with detachment and other moral qualities, as also with regular practice of contemplation, the mind can certainly be made one-pointed. Sincere effort, rightly guided, does bring success in the long run.

Sleep

The second obstacle that the *sādhaka* has to face on his path of attaining complete silence is sleep. The common mind has the experience of only two states. The first is the one in which the mind thinks, wills, feels, imagines or knows the external gross objects and embodied beings. The second is that in which it falls asleep. Therefore, as soon as you draw it back from the first state of worldly thinking, it has a tendency to fall into the second, the state of slumber.

If we remove the first obstacle, that is, if we succeed in stilling the mind, we are automatically faced with the second obstacle, that of sleep, which generally presents itself when the wandering of the mind is stopped or almost stopped. In the negative method of contemplation, discussed in the preceding pages, this obstacle appears soon after you sit for inner concentration. But it is not so in the positive methods, where the mind has to remain active because it has to be fixed on some form, name or idea and made empty and passive steadily, not all at once.

There may be some other reasons owing to which the mind shows a tendency to fall asleep during contemplation, such as taking heavy meals, physical or mental fatigue due to overwork, certain diseases of the body, or inadequate sleep at night, and so on.

The hindrance of sleep in contemplation is harder to overcome than the wandering of the mind. Nevertheless, through proper food, breathing exercises and the steady practice of watchfulness and alertness, this obstacle can be removed.

If all these precautions fail, the *sādhaka* should get up from his *āsana* when sleep is overpowering him during contemplation and walk for a while, conduct conscious and deep breathing, or else wash his face with cold water and then again sit on his *āsana*.

Temptations From Subtle Planes

When the barrier of the physical mind (i.e. the mind identified with the gross physical objects) is crossed through the withdrawal of consciousness from external objects and situations, and when the *sādhaka* also gains the ability to avoid falling into deep slumber, he generally becomes connected with the astral and psychic worlds through the subtle physical plane. Through this connection he begins to have a multitude of subtle experiences of the aforesaid worlds. None of these experiences is constant; they are just flashes which repeat themselves, sometimes very rapidly. Some of them are so seductive that the *sādhaka* falls into delusion and, becoming complacent, cherishes a preoccupation with these experiences for the temporary thrills they provide. Besides these fleeting visions, extraordinary powers such as clairvoyance flow into the mind of the practitioner from the higher psychic planes. But these too are not permanent possessions. All these are serious distractions, which can make true contemplation only pseudo in character, and can lead the student astray from the path of Self-Realization.

Those alone who are very, very sincere and highly discriminating can save themselves from such obstructing temptations, or else it is the spiritual guide, the adept, who can take the *sādhaka* across this critical

stage of *sādhanā* where many stop and to which many succumb and from where only a few can go ahead.

For the *sādhakas* who are advanced in devotion, and who perform their *sādhanā* in the spirit of surrender unto the Lord and regard the Lord as their refuge and shelter, such obstacles do not normally come. But if they do come, they are removed by the Lord Himself whenever they intervene and begin to distract the devotee.

The Extremist's Attitude

There are obstacles that intervene or present themselves without the will of the *sādhaka* and there are obstacles that the aspirant himself sometimes creates in the way of his contemplation. The cause of self-created obstacles is lack of experience and vision, because of which the *sādhaka* gives undue importance to certain practices that seem to him proper even though they actually hinder the work of inner concentration, and consequently he follows them obstinately. Extreme external practices such as prolonged fasting, decreasing the period of sleep during the night beyond a proper limit, standing on one leg without sitting at any time, remaining totally naked in the cold during winter, sitting on a hot bed of earth under the scorching heat of the sun, and such other transgressions (though they

are sometimes regarded as penance) actually hinder inwardness instead of helping it. Some *sādhakas* follow such practices under the pretext of inculcating in themselves the virtue of forbearance, or merely for displaying their power of forbearance in order to win praise from people. They fail to have inner peace.

By subjecting themselves to such dissipating influences, some seem to think that God can be tempted or forced in this way or that to come to them. That is not true. What is true is that through indulging in extremes, they only invite obstacles in the path of contemplation. Why dissipate energy, energy which can be more usefully spent in fixing the mind on the Divine, in combating self-created "intruders?" For practising forbearance, many opportunities are offered to the aspirant. He has only to be careful and eager to use them in his daily activities in combating the manifold imperfections of his nature.

The simple rule, to be strictly followed by the student of spiritual contemplation, is to seek nothing that interrupts or dissipates his energy. He should bear quietly and courageously all that comes unsought to him or is sent to him by God.

Aids

Reflection

Generally *sādhakas* complain that their minds do not concentrate or fix on the Divine during *sādhanā* in spite of their best efforts and instead wander after the worldly objects and situations without any apparent cause. This is because of lack of spiritual sincerity and dispassion. To get rid of this wavering or distraction of mind, the *sādhaka* should practise the method given below daily for at least fifteen to twenty minutes before starting meditation and also at other times whenever feasible. It will strengthen the *sādhaka's* spiritual sincerity and dispassion and the mind will also become steadily more calm and peaceful.

Sit down calmly. Do not think of any outward object; only look within so as to know your real interest. Introspect deeply, and observe dispassionately your imperfections that stand between you and the Divine. Make a firm resolve to face these impediments through the power of discrimination and love for God; or make yourself firmly determined to rise above and remain uninfluenced by the factors that impede your progress. By repeating this practice time and again, your mind will gradually be purged of the distractions and obstacles, or else it will come to remain unmoved by any distractions, and will ultimately become silent.

Proper Diet

The progress of the *sādhaka* depends to a significant degree upon the food he or she eats. Food is essential for the sustenance of the physical body; it also influences one's mind. There is an old saying, "***jaisā khāve anna vaisā hove mana***"—"A pure diet produces a pure mind."

Exceptions apart, feed a man on right food, and you can make him virtuous and efficient; feed him wrongly, and he turns into an idiot, a pessimist, a criminal or an invalid. Proper diet verily helps a man to be a man, and a man to become a superman; wrong diet may, on the other hand, make man a devastating brute. The scriptures declare:

> ***āhārashuddhau sattvashuddiḥ,***
> ***sattvashuddhau dhruvā smṛitiḥ,***
> ***smṛitilambhe sarvagranthīnām vipramokṣhaḥ.***
>
> Purity of food leads to purity of mind; purity of mind leads to a pure and strong memory and by acquiring such a memory[1] all the mental knots born of ignorance and attachment are opened.

What diet, then, should an aspirant take to gain physical and moral strength, which are indispensable

[1] Here "memory" means to again recognize one's true essential Nature.

for contemplation? There is no inflexible rule. You must discover carefully what type of food keeps your body fit and your mind clean and calm. The diet that causes constipation, or makes you restless must be avoided under all circumstances.

Apart from this, the food taken by the aspirant should be pure as far as possible. Pure food would be that type of food that is honestly earned and is cooked and served with love and devotion. In the following *shloka*, the *Gītā* hints as to what is the right food:

āyuḥsattvabalārogyasukhaprītivivardhanāḥ,
rasyāḥ snigdhāḥ sthirā hṛidyā āhārāḥ sāttvikapriyāḥ.

Foods that promote longevity, intelligence, vigour, health, happiness and cheerfulness and that are sweet, simple (non-spicy), substantial and naturally agreeable are dear to people of *sāttvic* temperament.

(Gītā 17.8)

As a general rule, edibles and drinks like *ghī*, green vegetables, milk, curd, butter, coarse wheat flour and fresh fruits are mostly conducive to *sādhanā*. Meat, eggs and excessive spices, on the other hand, are positively harmful for a spiritual seeker.

One thing that may be specially mentioned with regard to diet is that the use of all narcotics, like opium, *charas* and *bhāṅga*, as well as tobacco is strictly prohibited for the student of *yoga*. Some people take

these and say that narcotics help them in concentration, and under this pretext, they use them freely. Maybe these help a man in other matters, but as far as the achievement of spiritual concentration is concerned, such things definitely prove pernicious in the long run. Similar is the case with alcoholic liquors; these must also be totally shunned. These intoxicants weaken and poison the finer cells of the brain; they disable the student of contemplation from receiving the finer and higher spiritual experiences. Sometimes these intoxicants, when used in excess, prove very harmful and bring about brain disorders and insanity.

Prāṇayāma

The literal meaning of *prāṇayāma* is control of *prāṇa. Prāṇa* is actually not breath, as it is often mistakenly understood. It is the life force, one of the powers of the soul, which makes the body move through the movement of the nervous and physiological systems.

Breath, *prāṇa* and mind are deeply interconnected. Control over breath leads one to assume control over *prāṇa*; and through control over *prāṇa* the activities of the mind are completely controlled. In the system of *haṭha yoga*, *prāṇayāma* is given the highest place in *sādhanā* and is to be mastered primarily. But in the *yoga* of contemplation, it is practised only as a second-

ary measure in bringing about a rhythmic and regular movement of the breath, which aids inner concentration. The *Yoga Sūtrās* also declare this in the following two verses:

> ***tataḥ kṣhīyate prakāshāvaraṇam.***
> ***dhāraṇāsu cha yogyatā manasaḥ.***
>
> Through *prāṇayāma* the veil of ignorance covering the light of the *Ātmā* is destroyed.
>
> (Yoga Sūtrās of Patañjali 2.52, 2.53)

Also, when performed rightly, *prāṇayāma* helps to purify the body and mind.

There are many techniques of practising *prāṇayāma*, but without going into detail, a simple method, which can be practised by one and all without any danger, is given below:

Sit cross-legged (if you cannot sit cross-legged, sit in a chair) keeping the body in such a position that the spine remains erect. Close the right nostril with the middle finger of the left hand, inhale through the left nostril very slowly and fill the lungs to capacity. By filling the lungs fully, the *prāṇa* should become active up to the *mūlādhāra chakra* located at the lower end of the spinal cord. In this process the *mūla-bandha* should be made. *Mūla-bandha* means the inward contraction of the generative organ and the rectum.

Without retaining the breath within, open the right nostril and exhale through it gradually by keeping the left nostril closed with the thumb of the left hand until all the air is completely exhaled. This is one half of a complete cycle of *prāṇayāma*.

Now, without taking a pause, inhale again through the right nostril, very slowly filling the lungs to capacity as before. Then breathe out slowly through the left nostril. This completes the other half of one cycle of *prāṇayāma*.

Thus all these four processes — two of inhaling and two of exhaling — make one complete cycle of *prāṇayāma*. During all these four processes, the generative organ as well as the rectum are to be kept contracted inward. While filling the lungs, the belly should not bulge out; it should also be kept contracted. It is forbidden to practise *prāṇayāma* on a full stomach.

A beginner will take about seventy to eighty seconds to complete one cycle of *prāṇayāma*. A *sādhaka* may start the practice by doing five such cycles before starting contemplation.

Deep and Conscious Breathing

Sit erect as already suggested and breathe slowly and deeply. Simultaneously watch the incoming and outgoing of breath. After a certain period of practice,

the breath will become quite light, rhythmic and regular.

It is a very simple practice which everyone, young or old, can do. It can be practised for about fifteen minutes before starting contemplation.

Deep and conscious breathing is very conducive for strengthening one's willpower and making the mind calm and composed. Every *sādhaka* is recommended to practise it many times a day when he is free from work. It also removes physical and mental fatigue.

Proper Place and Time

The *sādhaka* should feel the presence of the Lord all through his day-to-day activities at all places and at all times; but for one-pointed contemplation, which requires the whole attention to be exclusively fixed upon the Divine, he must retreat to a proper, clean and quiet place which is free from all disturbances. It is obvious that each place has its own special vibrations. The kitchen, drawing room, bedroom, dinning room, toilet and meditation room all have their own particular vibrations.

Those who have passed the age of sixty and have retired from active life may settle in a quiet corner of some town or village with a moderate climate, preferably situated at the bank of a river in some holy

place, provided they have the means and money to do so. It will certainly make it easier for them to draw within and meditate. Those who still have to work and run household affairs and live a busy life in a town or city should keep a small, separate room for prayer and contemplation if they have sufficient accommodation. If not, they should reserve a corner of a room for this purpose. Such a reserved place, where only prayer and meditation are conducted regularly, becomes charged with spiritual vibrations and is helpful to the *sādhaka* in spiritual contemplation. What a pity that people today choose to flow along the wild current of materialism and do everything to have commodious drawing rooms for their guests, but for God they do not even think of sparing a small room. Sleeping in the place reserved for contemplation should be avoided because it creates an atmosphere of dullness and laziness, which hinders concentration. That is the reason why in olden times every Indian would keep in his home a small, separate room, known as *ṭhākura dvārā*, for offering daily prayers and practising contemplation. This tradition still continues in certain families. Such small reserved rooms ought to be decorated with the pictures of great saints and sages because the contact with these symbols, or say, their *darshana*, helps in arousing the latent divine tendencies in us.

The proper time for one-pointed contemplation is *brahma muhūrta*, the period beginning about three hours before sunrise. The body as well as the mind are quite fresh at that time, and it is easier to sit in one posture for a greater length of time with a steady mind. Besides, this time suits almost all except the lethargic and the lazy, for whom spiritual achievement is a fictitious affair. Early rising is an important and healthy habit, which the spiritual aspirant must cultivate with practice. So, in *brahma muhūrta*, one or two hours can be easily spared for prayer and meditation. Those whom this time does not suit for any reason, may fix some other time for offering prayers and practising contemplation.

This apart, before going to sleep at night some time must be devoted to prayer and *japa*. Going to sleep with the remembrance of the Divine does much good because by doing so, the subconscious mind keeps on performing *japa* automatically during sleep. Thus sleep can also be utilised for a nobler purpose. The suggestion given to the subconscious mind goes deeper. In fact, *japa* and meditation are the techniques to make the remembrance of God enter the subconscious mind.

Also during the daytime, one can relax in one's chair in the office, or even in the workshop or home,

for three to four minutes and reflect for a while on the true purpose of human life. Lowering one's eyelids, one can very humbly and silently whisper in the heart, "I am Thine, Lord! Pray, take me into Thy fold." This may be repeated after every three to four hours during the day — a very simple thing to do, but very efficacious. It keeps you recollected, even in the turmoil of worldly affairs, in relation to your Supreme Master. And, after all, what does it cost you to do so? Only a sincere will and deep aspiration to remember the Divine.

Regularity

If you want sure and quick spiritual progress, always be sincere and regular in the practice of contemplation. Through the break of a few days in contemplation, even of a day or two, you lose much of what you have gained during months of steady practice. It is only through a long and very regular practice of contemplation that one is able to reach the unforced spontaneity of spiritual concentration.

Don't miss even a day of sitting in prayer and meditation at the time fixed for that purpose. The pause of even one day does much in upsetting your *sādhanā*, because the break of one day paves the way for the subsequent breaks of many days. Some people say,

"In these days of complex living we cannot be sure of time because it is heavily taxed, and unforeseen appointments cannot be rejected." But have you not already made an appointment with God? Is it good manners to make a new appointment with someone at a certain time, when you have already given that particular time to someone else? Should you keep him on the waiting list? If such behaviour is taken to be unreasonable with ordinary mortals, how shamefully absurd would it be to behave like this towards God, whom you take to be the object of the highest reverence and adoration! Is it, then, at all wise for a *sādhaka* to be too serious about things and persons that are, after all, only creations of God?

Spiritual Guide

The need of a guide is apparent in every walk of life, but in spiritual matters it is much too patent to be disregarded. The work of a spiritual guide is not only to initiate the neophyte, but to lead him throughout the spiritual journey. A spiritual guide or *Guru* is to the disciple a spiritual "pick-me-up," as it were, for all the seasons of his life. While performing contemplation, the *sādhaka* may, at certain critical turns, involve himself in dangerous distractions from which it is next to impossible, if not totally impossible, to come out spiritually safe if the *Guru*'s help and guidance do

not intervene. The *Guru* is a most compassionate friend, who awakens you from within towards the Life everlasting. Raising the disciple above mere beliefs and convictions about God, the *Guru* enables him to enter into the realm of spiritual experience.

Moreover, it is the blessed *Guru* who uplifts the disciple from time to time when he (i.e. the *Guru*) perceives laxity creeping into the disciple's *sādhanā*, or when the disciple's faith in the Lord wavers and his perseverance loses strength and steadiness. The living influence of a real *Guru* is irresistible for the receptive disciple; he finds himself enveloped by his *Guru*'s selfless love and sees the light of his Master leading him along the difficult path.

Much untruth grows in the name of truth. It is regrettable that an infection of false *gurudom* is spreading at present like an epidemic. It is a thing that must be discouraged and rooted out.

Svādhyāya and Satsaṅga

It is not helpful for a seeker of Truth to decry the eternal truths contained in the revealed scriptures. Devote some time daily to reading them. Through this process you indirectly come in contact with their holy authors. Read properly with deep faith. Thorough understanding of the scriptures inspires us and fills us

with wisdom and helps us in making the mind peaceful. Don't recite merely parrot-like. Better to read less, but read with a keen will and sharp understanding. Then you may reap some benefit.

Students of contemplation must also avail themselves of periodic *satsaṅga* (contact with holy persons and *yogīs*). The *Vedas* exhort:

> ***uttiṣhṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata***
>
> Wake up, arise and realize God through association with the noble ones.
>
> (Kaṭha Upaniṣhad 1.3.14)

Many knots are opened, many doubts removed through listening to the words of the enlightened souls. You should not approach holy men to discuss God with them as parliamentarians discuss affairs of the state or as academicians discuss scholastic matters. There is not to be a war of words or a show of wit; there is not to be a rhetorical hurling of hollow arguments. There should be, on the other hand, a transmission of experience and grace, a silent flow of divine vibrations as may be only felt and not expressed. It is not necessary that all sages communicate only through words. Some sages, like Ramana Maharshi, mostly remained in silence. Often the impact of such silence is more powerful than that of words. Seekers should approach such saints and sages with love, reverence and true aspira-

tion to know the Truth and have their doubts removed by them. The *Gītā* advises us:

> ***tad viddhi praṇipātena pariprashnena sevayā,***
> ***upadekṣhyanti te jñānam jñāninas tattvadarshinaḥ.***
>
> One should understand the true nature of spiritual knowledge by approaching the enlightened ones. If you prostrate at their feet, serve them and put your doubts/questions before them with an open and guileless heart, those wise seers of Truth will instruct you in that Knowledge. (Gītā 4.34)

Remember that God Himself speaks through his devotees and saints. One should listen to such saints and sages with great respect and humility. Right listening is very, very difficult. Only an open, peaceful and alert mind, free from ready-made beliefs and prejudices, has the capacity to listen. Therefore, listen to them attentively and try to mould your life according to their directions. It will give you peace here and hereafter.

Balanced Living

Many *sādhakas*, in the hope of a quick spiritual take-off, ignorantly refuse to dive deep within because they indulge in extremes. All the adepts have acknowledged and professed that moderation or temperance is the most conducive condition for contemplation. Even

a man like Gautama had to abandon his extreme austerities and follow the course of the "middle way" to achieve Buddhahood. It will be useful to narrate here an anecdote from his life, which brought about a notable shift in the direction of his spiritual effort.

Gautama the Buddha practised so many methods and ways of discipline before realizing his ideal. In the outset, he sought Truth through metaphysical discussions, but soon gave up this approach. He then took to *tapas* and performed most severe physical penance for a long time, but this did not give him peace, nor did it reveal the Truth he sought, rather it gave him extraordinary powers. In a state of great restlessness and eagerness to find the essential peace of *nirvāṇa*, he sat in a steady posture and made a firm resolve to keep sitting there unmoved until he found enlightenment. Thus, renouncing all worldly desires, sleep, rest and even food and drink, he sat in that posture and said:

> ***ihāsane shuṣhyatu me sharīram***
> ***tvagasthimānsāni layam prayāntu,***
> ***aprāpya bodham bahukalpadurlabham***
> ***naivāsanāt kāyam idam chaliṣhyati.***

> In this very posture let my body wither away; let the skin, the flesh and the bones perish too. Enlightenment is difficult to

> achieve in many aeons. Without desire
> this body does not go on living.
>
> (Lalitavistara, ch.19, Majjhima Nikaya 70)

With such a motiveless motive he kept sitting there. Who has ever known the ways of divine providence? One day, a female dancer happened to pass by that way with some of her friends. She was singing a song, a couplet, which contained the meaning, "Tighten not too much the strings of a sitar, lest they break; nor should you loosen them to the point that the sitar goes out of tune and the sweet music ceases to flow from it."

Gautama was moved by the import of this song. He pondered over it deeply and, in the end, realized his error. It clearly dawned on him that it was not correct to take recourse to extreme outer mortification. He relaxed his posture. Soon after, he renounced the extremely austere course of penance, adopted the "middle way" and within a period of two years won his cherished ideal.

Lack of water dries up a crop but so also does an excess of water spoil it. Similar is the case with *yoga-sādhanā*. Extreme outer activity decidedly hinders inner concentration, but so also does the indiscriminating and extreme renunciation of action and objects harm it. There is the temptation to indulge in temporalities; there is also the temptation to avoid them

completely. A wise *sādhaka* strikes the middle course; he maintains equipoise in all activities such as sleeping, walking, working and eating. Mark what the *Gītā* says:

> ***nāty ashnatas tu yogo 'sti na chaikāntam anashnataḥ,***
> ***na chāti svapnashīlasya jāgrato naiva chārjuna.***
>
> *Yoga*, which rids one of woe, is accomplished only by he who is regulated in diet and recreation, regulated in performing actions, and regulated in sleeping and waking. (Gītā 6.16)
>
> ***yuktāhāravihārasya yuktacheṣhṭasya karmasu,***
> ***yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhahā.***
>
> Also, Arjuna, this *yoga* is not for he who eats too much, nor for he who does not eat at all, nor for he who sleeps too much, nor for he who is ceaselessly awake. (Gītā 6.17)

To sum up, moderation in eating, sleeping, walking and in other activities ensures progress in *yoga*. It is not through violent effort but through proper technique, wisdom and unsleeping awareness that spiritual concentration can be realized. In the proper balancing of activity and inactivity, love and detachment, service and devotion and knowledge lies the secret of spiritual success.

Om Om Om



CHAPTER SIX

A Few Inner Experiences

"When consciousness sufficiently deepens, these passing visions and flashes cease and one begins to feel an inner spiritual ecstasy, which goes on increasing progressively. This inner ecstasy pulls you within irresistibly."



A Few Inner Experiences

A mind that plunges within its inner recesses must have a number of inner visions and experiences that cannot be felt by an ordinary person engaged in the pursuit of the world. These visions and experiences come to different *sādhakas* in different manners and they may vary in quality from one *sādhaka* to another, depending upon their stages, modes of *sādhanā*, inclinations and physical constitutions.

This statement about the variation in inner experiences provokes the question, "Are these experiences not merely hallucinations of the *sādhaka's* mind?" No, these are not hallucinations. An example should make the point clear. Suppose you send a few men separately to the same market to have a look at and describe the things displayed there. Everyone will reveal his likes and dislikes, and in every description we will notice omissions. This is natural because individual temperaments are different. This is the reason why descriptions differ in their mode. One individual is

attracted by some things to which another individual is indifferent — this is due to difference in taste and *sanskāras.* This is also true of inner spiritual experience.

Moreover, in spite of this variation, there are certain prominent things or spots that arrest the attention of everyone, maybe for a very short period. Similarly, even though the inner experiences of different *sādhakas* do vary, there are certain common experiences that are prominent. Only some of them are given below:

1. In the preliminary stage of inwardness, certain sounds such as that of a drum beating at a low pitch, the sound produced by flowing water, the sound of thunder, or humming of bees, are heard in the head through the right ear. Certain colours also appear at the point between the eyebrows. These sounds and colours, which are inconstant, and which come and go alternately, are those of the five subtle elements in their pure form (*tanmātrās*), that is, earth, water, fire, air and ether.

On hearing these sounds and seeing these colours during concentration, some *sādhakas* imagine that they have advanced far in contemplation. This shows their lack of knowledge of spiritual matters. There is nothing spiritual in seeing these colours or in hearing these

sounds; these are reflected in consciousness only because of the contact of the mind with the subtle physical plane.

These sounds and colours actually disintegrate consciousness and hamper one-pointedness. As such, they should not be entertained and given importance. An adept calls them empty colours and spiritually useless sounds.

2. A little deeper inwardness takes one to the astral (*prāṇic*) plane where a number of things are seen and experienced. Very often one hears voices whispered in the ears. Sometimes one hears messages, which are quite clear, but few of them are genuine and many are false and misleading. Here the *sādhaka* must be on guard and should not follow blindly any message, voice or suggestion. Besides this, a multitude of visions come during contemplation at this stage. At the lower levels of the astral plane some frightful scenes appear, while at its higher levels many kinds of fascinating scenes are seen. Most of them are the symbolic representations of things, states, forces and beings of the astral plane, while some represent actual happenings in that plane. It is not prudent to get entangled in such visions and voices, which just come and pass away. Disregarding them, one must move deeper and deeper inwards and try to achieve one-pointedness. In fact,

the fervent and sincere *sādhakas* do not remain in this stage for long, but pass over it quickly and safely.

3.(a) After leaving the astral plane, one-pointed concentration gains momentum and soon ripens. One begins to have the elevating and blissful experience of the higher planes. Saints of a higher order, living or departed, often appear during contemplation. They come to bless and help the *sādhaka*. They should be saluted and adored. Sometimes they talk about spiritual matters and guide the *sādhaka*.

(b) Visions of gods and goddesses also occur at this stage. The personal *Iṣhṭa* of the *sādhaka* appears many a time during contemplation. Not only this, he gives *darshana* even when one is sitting or lying in a relaxed mental state, with eyes open. Such experiences give much *ānanda* and uplift the mind. The soothing and sweet impact of such visions lasts for many days.

(c) On some occasions during contemplation, events happening in remote places or events that are to happen in the future are reflected in consciousness in full detail. The power of mind reading is also felt frequently at this stage. The *sādhaka* can develop, if he so wishes, the powers of clairvoyance, clairaudience and telepathy very easily, but such preoccupation hinders his further spiritual progress. The adepts, therefore, always warn the aspirant not to employ himself in developing these

temporal powers or *vibhūtīs*, as they are termed in *yogic* parlance.

(d) Flashes of light of a more dynamic character are seen frequently. An effulgent golden light sometimes appears before the *sādhaka's* open eyes when he or she is sitting calmly, and all things dissolve in it. It lasts only for a few minutes. Such flashes are indications of some coming spiritual realization.

(e) One hears a peculiar thrilling sound issuing from the heart-centre (in the middle of the chest), which instantaneously permeates the whole body, like an electric current. It renders the *sādhaka* completely oblivious of the external world. After a period of about fifteen minutes, this sound-energy is centralized in *ājñā chakra* and turns into a dazzling light. This is a very blissful experience. Some words appear as if written by lightening on the forehead during contemplation. Sometimes they are very, very clear and can be properly read word by word.

The above-mentioned experiences (a, b, c, d, e) generally come to those who practise *mantra japa* for long periods daily.

4. When consciousness sufficiently deepens, these passing visions and flashes cease and one begins to feel an inner spiritual ecstasy, which goes on increasing progressively. This inner ecstasy pulls you within

irresistibly. All the temptations and lures of the world lose their power to charm the *sādhaka* when he has attained this stage, and he feels himself drawn again and again to solitary places to sit alone and enjoy this inner delight.

Here the *sādhanā* takes a new turn and becomes more and more spontaneous. The sense of personal effort begins to fade away, but the pace of *sādhanā* accelerates vigorously.

5. This spiritual ecstasy is merged into ineffable, deep peace as the aspirant advances on his path. The outer and inner worlds are completely obliterated and consciousness is plunged into its static, passive repose. Here bondage and freedom, pain and pleasure, with all the other pairs of opposites, cease to exist. *Tamoguṇa*, sleep and laziness being absolutely absent, simple Awareness — silent, attributeless and immutable — alone abides. This is, according to the new *vedāntins*, the state of merger with *Brahma*. To this very state, the Buddhists give the name *nirvāṇa*, the extinction of the world of name and form. *Nirvāṇa*, *shūnya* or void are the terms which denote, according to orthodox Buddhism, not "nothingness" — as is wrongly conceived by some people — but the pure "Is-ness" bereft of the world of name and form. This direct experience of the immutable, pure and relation-

less Self gives one perfect release from the mutations of the *guṇas*. On coming down a little from this experience, when the mind emerges again, the world seems to be a mere shadow with no substance to it — an unreal, vain and useless play of *māyā* composed of the three *guṇas*.

Let one more thing be pointed out here. To call this world *mithyā* or unreal on the grounds of logic or intellectualism, or in adherence to some system of philosophy, is one thing and to feel and experience the world as such first-hand is quite another. The lasting experience of the unreality of the world of name and form comes to those alone who are blessed with the direct Realization of the pure, passive, inactive and silent Self, i.e. the *Nirguṇa* aspect of the Divine. This experience is rare. Anyone may, on the other hand, conceive or declare the world to be unreal by establishing intellectually the trivial nature of the world or by means of logic.

The experience of the silent Self and its concomitant purview of the world as a shallow, unreal, useless and purposeless appearance, though a very high experience in the spiritual field, is, let it be known, not the ultimate or perfect spiritual experience.

6. Further on, Consciousness, ever remaining established in Its immovable poise, again looks, as it were, out-

wards and begins to assimilate the "All" in Itself and gradually realizes its essential oneness in and with the "All."

In order to reach the ultimate spiritual experience, one has to pass through two more intermediary experiences, but these are not being described here. In the Fulfilment of the perfect spiritual experience, the gulf between *Nirguṇa* and *Saguṇa*, between the impersonal and personal, between nature and God, and between active Self and passive Self, is completely bridged. All these powers, forms and principles are different aspects of one Existence, which are conceived by the being standing at the level of mental consciousness, that is, by the individual soul of man, as different from each other or even mutually contradictory. They enter into a harmonious oneness in the spiritual Absolute.

Om Om Om

CHAPTER SEVEN

Prayer

"Sincere prayer has tremendous power in it, and it works miracles. An aspirant of the divine Life cannot do without prayer. He or she must pray at every step of his or her spiritual movement."



Prayer

Prayer, in its truest sense, is a humble and creative act of the will through which one pours out one's heart unto the Lord. Through prayer we may ask something for ourselves or for others, or without asking anything, only reverently adore the Lord, who is conceived by us as the Supreme Being worthy of all adoration, reverence and love.

There are three factors required in advance for every prayer, whatever be its form, in order for it to be heard and granted by the Lord:

1. A firm conviction or belief in the existence of God who is merciful and also all-powerful.
2. An intense feeling of love and reverence unto the Lord, or the feeling of some material, mental or spiritual necessity and need.
3. To a certain extent the concentration of one's will and humbleness of heart.

Any vocal prayer that lacks all these factors is bound to be hollow.

All legitimate prayers that arise from a pure and sincere heart — rather than those that are merely uttered orally, parrot-like, without intensity of feeling — are positively heard and granted. This cannot be denied, because life proves it at every step. A fact is always a fact whether man can know or explain it scientifically and logically or not. Sincere prayer has tremendous power in it, and it works miracles.

An aspirant of the divine Life cannot do without prayer. He or she must pray at every step of his or her spiritual movement. The prayer which is the most passive is the most effective, because the lesser the ego, the more grace we receive, and consequently, the closer we get to the Divine.

What should one pray for and how should one adore the Lord? The answer to this question would depend upon the legitimate needs and the moral and spiritual standing of different individuals.

However, a brief prayer, which may suit almost all types of aspirants and which can be offered by all the *sādhakas* before starting daily contemplation, is given below:

> ***svasty astu vishvasya khalaḥ prasīdatām***
> ***dhyāyantu bhūtāni shivam mitho dhiyā,***
> ***manashcha bhadram bhajatād adhokṣhaje***
> ***āveshyatām no matirapyahaitukī.***

O Lord, the Refuge of the refugeless and the Supreme Master of this universe, may good be to the whole world; may the wretched ones turn into kind people; may all the living beings wish happiness to one another; may their hearts be motivated by mutual love and welfare; and may our hearts turn effortlessly and motivelessly to Thy holy feet.

O Lord Supreme! Before Thee, who art Perfect Purity, who art the embodiment of Infinite Power, who art the infinite source of Boundless Knowledge, Unlimited Bliss, Unabating Light and Love, I prostrate in deep love and reverence a thousand, thousand times.

O Lord of lords! Who art at once immanent and transcendent, and One without a second, I come to Thy shelter; pray, make me Thine; draw me closer and closer to Thee; give me full protection under Thy benign hand. My Lord! I am Thine, I am Thine, I am Thine. Whatsoever I am, I am Thine. Whosoever I am, I take refuge in Thee.

O Lord of all! Through Thy grace may my body remain healthy; may my heart become pure and clean; may my understanding be clear and penetrating; may my mind be steady and peaceful. My Lord! Through Thy grace may my whole life, having become clean and developed, be spent incessantly in Thy remembrance, in Thy service and in Thy contemplation.

O Merciful One! Give me the strength that I may seek Thee, and see Thee; give me the strength that I may seek myself and see myself; give me the strength that I may see the Truth and live the Truth.

Turn, O perfect Lord, my imperfections into perfection, my infirmities into wholeness. Merging me in Thyself, my Lord! Make me perfect.

My thousand, thousand salutations unto Thee!

Om Om Om

CHAPTER EIGHT

Begin Here And Now

"All nature is toiling to be delivered from the vanity of time. Will you alone lie in slumber? Arise, for the day is passing! Awake and march on and on to the spiritual depths within, and to the divine fullness without, and stop not till the Goal is reached."



Begin Here and Now

The great poet-saint Palaṭū (1710 to 1780 AD) warns us against slackness and a lukewarm attitude towards spiritual *sādhanā* in the following beautiful words:

> ***bhajana āturī kījiye aura bāta meň dera,***
> ***aura bāta meň dera, jagat meň jīvana thoḍā,***
> ***mānuṣha tana dhana jāta, goḍa dhara karo nihorā.***
> ***kaňcha mahala ke bīcha, eka paňçhī rahitā,***
> ***dasa daravājā khulā, uḍana ko nita uṭha chahitā.***
> ***bhaja lījai bhagavāna, isī meň bhalā hai apanā,***
> ***āvāgamana çhūṭa jāye, janama kī miṭe kalpanā.***
> ***palaṭū aṭaka na kījiye, chaurāsī kā phera,***
> ***bhajana āturī kījiye, aura bāta meň dera.***

> O man, postpone your worldly pursuits, but not your spiritual salvation. Remember God now, zealously and earnestly, for time is running out. Human life is fleeting and transient, as are all worldly acquisitions. Therefore call on God steadfastly. The bird of the Spirit residing in the glasshouse of the body-senses-mind is ever anxious to fly away and break

> free from their shackles. When the ten doors of the senses give way at the time of death, it flies off on its further journey. The good lies only in God-Realization, for it alone breaks the vicious cycle of life and death and the illusion of coming and going. Palaṭū exhorts against procrastination in remembering God. Otherwise one must be condemned to be reborn and wander in the form of a million types of creatures (to reap the fruit of one's *karmas*). Remember! Other things can wait, but not God-Realization.

Some years ago, a person — a well-to-do person with sound health and plenty of wealth — said to me, "I have seen much of this life, I am now going to devote the whole of my attention and capacity to prayer and meditation four months hence." He was at that time preoccupied with some "urgent domestic affair," which he hoped to settle within a period of four months, and then he was to give himself to God-remembrance. After one and a half months, as I came to know afterwards, the gentleman expired after only a brief illness. Who knows what ideas and longings he took with him when he breathed his last!

Another gentleman was to set out wholeheartedly for the quest of the Infinite after the education, marriage and settling down of his dear and only son. His son has now finished his educational career, has been

married and is well settled. This happened long ago; but the son's father — the spiritually unfortunate fellow — is now playing with his grandchildren at home, and is engaged in devising schemes for the worldly welfare of his grandchildren as also for the would-be great-grandchildren. See the play of *māyā*! About such people the scriptures say:

yaḥ prāpya mānuṣham deham muktidvāram apāvṛitam, gṛiheṣhu khagavadāsaktastamārūḍhachyutam viduḥ.

The one who, having been bestowed with a precious human body, remains attached to his house and possessions like birds and does not make any effort for liberation, is an indolent and fallen person and such a one is called *ārūḍha chyut* (uprooted from the ground) by the holy scriptures.

These two gentlemen are not exceptions, but their example can be applied to mankind in general. We hear people say, "Let this or that business of ours be over; let such and such duties be fulfilled and then single-mindedly shall we turn to God and lead the life of spiritual contemplation." But most commonly, if not in one hundred percent of cases, it is found that neither are their jobs completed, nor are their duties discharged, till they breathe their last. They go on postponing the spiritual task, thereby failing to do what they have been sent into this world for by their Creator. They are like the bullock in the oil mill who never

reaches the wisp of hay tied in front of him; he only grinds the oil. To such men the world plays the will-o'-the-wisp.

To prefer the world to its Maker and to defer good deeds, more particularly, prayer and spiritual contemplation, to the non-existent future, is a very wrong attitude based on ignorance and inertia. It obstructs the flow of the inner light. Beware! It is Satan playing you the fool, robbing you of your wits and precious time and keeping you divorced or trying to divorce you from your Lord. Remember:

> ***anityāni sharīrāṇi vibhavo naiva shāshvataḥ,***
> ***nityam sannihito mṛityuḥ karttavyo dharmasaṅgrahaḥ.***
>
> The physical body is mortal and the worldly riches and glory too are not eternal. Death, standing close by, is ever knocking at the door. Therefore, one ought to gather and preserve what is righteous and spiritual.

Who has seen tomorrow? Who knows when suddenly the call from the unknown world may come — a call to which no one can ever say, "Wait a little, please!" As the popular saying goes, "***jagat chabenā kāla kā, kuçha mukha meṅ kuçha goda***"—"This world is but a morsel of food for death; some are dying and some are waiting to die." By forgetting death, death does not cease to come; by ignoring *Shiva*, one cannot elude His hands. Time is short, the way is long and life's evening is approaching fast. Why waste away the pre-

cious moments in making money and serving the false vulnerable ego and calling it social service. The safest and soundest course is to begin here and now. The past is dead, the future is unknown.

The present alone is real; the present alone is living. Can anyone live yesterday or live tomorrow? Even to think of the past and future you inevitably have to make them present. Only the present is life, and this life is not ours — we are simply its custodians; it is God's and unto God it must be consecrated.

Should everyone then renounce one's hearth and home and run to the jungle to find Him? Not necessarily, and that is also not the point. The point is that the aspirant must adjust himself in his environment in such a manner that instead of indulging in daydreaming about devoting himself to spiritual *sādhanā* at some later stage of his life, he should start now and sit daily for regular meditation and prayer, making the best use of the present.

"But in the complex circumstances of today, it is impossible to live in this world and at the same time sincerely tread the path to God or rise up to the life of purity and spiritual consummation," the sceptics may say. But this is exaggerating the difficulty. It is found that even in adverse and unfavourable circumstances, some people do sit regularly in spiritual contemplation and they do rise very high to the divine felicity,

whereas, on the other side, there are those who have sufficient facilities in life, sufficient means and measures to rise spiritually, if only they had the will, but they do not sit in prayer at all and are quite bankrupt spiritually. In reality, the excuse of unfavourable circumstances for not taking to the divine path is, in most cases, another pretence put forward by the lower ego, because it always hates and shirks possession by the higher Self. There are certain situations and conditions that hinder spiritual unfoldment, I do admit. But is it not true that the morale of a soldier in a battlefield counts more than the equipment he has? "Where there is a will, there is a way," as the old saying goes. The crux of the problem is the hypnotisation of men by the *guṇas*, because of which they become ensnared in the world. There must be keen aspiration and a sincere will and the rest follows. The Lord chooses us only if He is also chosen by us. He does help us, provided we choose to be helped by Him.

What harm is done to the Lord if we do not remember Him? What is it to Him if we do not pray? It is really we who lose Him, the most compassionate eternal companion of the soul; we give Him up in favour of perishable and uncertain things and selfish persons who will inevitably disown us.

Dear friend! This human body, in spite of its perishable nature, is a most valuable possession from the viewpoint of spiritual *sādhanā*:

> ***baḍe bhāga mānuṣha tanu pāvā,***
> ***sura durlabha sada granthanhi gāvā.***
> ***kabahuṅka kari karuṇā nara dehī,***
> ***deta īsha binu heta sanehī.***
>
> It is by good fortune that you have secured a human body, which, as declared by all the scriptures, is difficult even for the gods to attain. Rarely does God, who loves the *jīva* without any self-interest, graciously bestow on it a human form.
>
> (Shri Rāmacharitamānasa, Uttarakāṇḍa 42,43)

To despise the body totally, or else to take it as a means of self-gratification, is a wrong attitude. It shows a complete misunderstanding of things. Do not fritter it away in vain talking and trifles. It gives you the rare opportunity of returning from your period of exile in the world of time to your real home, which is the Lord Eternal. Let not this golden chance be wasted. Be wise and alert. Pray and live. Make it a point to begin here and now. Practise the Lord's name ceaselessly and drink the nectar. Meditate on thy real Self and be free! What is it that can drive you, who art the divine child, away from God, who is the real Father? Give up all

weakness. Why should you succumb to the vagaries of the world? Why not obey the voice of Truth within? Why postpone the approach to the Supreme Deliverer to a distant future, while He is ever-present within you and while you need deliverance now?

All nature is toiling to be delivered from the vanity of time. Will you alone lie in slumber? Arise, for the day is passing! Awake and march on and on to the spiritual depths within, and to the divine fullness without, and stop not till the Goal is reached.

uttiṣhṭhadhvam jāgṛidhvam
agnim ichçhadhvam bhārata.
O aspirant, awake and arise
and aspire for the fire of
Knowledge that is liberation.

MAY PEACE BE TO ALL!

Om Om Om

Glossary

achārya: a great scholar in some faculty of learning (viz. music, literature, etc.); a knower or exponent of the *Vedas* and other scriptures; a learned spiritual master; a teacher in a school/college.

Advaita Vedānta: the most influential school of *Vedānta* propounded mainly by Shaṅkarāchārya. It asserts that there is a total identity between *Brahma* (the ultimate Reality) and *Ātmā* (the eternal Self of all that exists) and that the apparent multiplicity is only phenomenal and delusive and that the Ultimate Reality is "One without a second."

ājñā chakra: the sixth of the seven *chakras*; it is situated between the two eyebrows in the forehead and is considered the centre of vision, ideas and knowledge; it is sometimes called the third eye.

akṣhara: that which is indestructible and immutable (*Nirguṇa Brahma*).

anāhata chakra: the fourth of the seven *chakras*; it is situated in the heart region and is regarded as the centre of emotion, feeling and sound.

ānanda: joy, bliss; Absolute Bliss; one of the three names which designates not the characteristic of *Brahma,* but Its essential Nature (*svarūpa*), others being *sat* and *chit.*

arūḍha chyut: a person uprooted from a spiritual origin.

āsana: seat, posture or mode of sitting; third of the eight limbs of *Patañjali's Aṣhtaṅga Yoga.*

Ātmā: the real Self; innermost divine Reality of everyone and everything, identical with *Brahma.*

avalambana: support.

avatāra: lit. "descent"; God assuming a physical body.

bhajan: general term for prayer and meditation; devotional and popular religious songs.

bhakti: loving devotion to God.

bhāṅga: a kind of narcotic.

bhāva samādhi: a type of *samādhi* in which the devotee is totally absorbed in God and completely forgets his/her body and all worldly matters.

bhikṣhu: mendicant; monk from the Buddhist *saṅgha.*

brahma muhūrta: the period beginning about three hours before sunrise which is considered conducive for *sādhanā.*

Brahma: the Absolute, the Divine or Godhead; the absolute Existence-Consciousness-Bliss; the Truth or the ultimate all-pervasive and transcendental Reality; identical with *Ātmā, Paramātmā, Puruṣhottama.* It is different from *Brahmā*, the Creator aspect of God.

charas: narcotic; hashish.

daivī sampatti: lit. "divine treasures"; virtues like nonviolence, truthfulness, humility, quietude and com-

posure of mind, compassion, non-attachment, purity, etc. as mentioned in chapter 16 of the Gītā.

darshana: inner or external vision; sight of a sage or God which is considered auspicious; a philosophical system or a school of thought. In Hinduism there are six classical *darshanas*: *Pūrva Mimānsā*, *Nyāya*, *Vaisheṣhik*, *Sāṅkhya*, *Yoga* and *Vedānta* (*Uttara Mimānsā*).

ghī: clarified butter used in Indian cooking.

Gītā: song; usually designates the *Bhagavad Gītā*, one of the best known of the Hindu sacred scriptures. It contains the spiritual teachings imparted by Lord Kṛiṣhna to His disciple Arjuna on the battlefield.

gudaḍi: The dress worn by a mendicant; an apron-like dress.

guṇas: the three basic qualities of Nature (*Prakṛiti*) according to *Sāṅkhya* philosophy: *tamasa* (inertia), *rajasa* (activity) and *sattva* (light).

Guru: teacher; spiritual Master.

gurudom: the pomp and show associated with being a Guru (used in a negative sense).

haṭha yoga: the practice of physical discipline involving extreme physical mortification; also refers to the practice of *āsanas* and *prāṇayāma*.

I-ness: the spontaneous awareness of one's being; basically the same as *Is-ness*.

Iṣhṭa: lit. "chosen"; the personal God; the chosen deity of an individual worshipper (also called *Iṣhṭa devatā*).

Īshvara: God as the omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent Creator, Controller, Preserver and Destroyer of the world; in *Advaita-Vedānta*, *Īshvara* is *Saguṇa Brahma,* as *Brahma* is related to the manifest world of appearance, and is thus worthy of worship. But like the *jīva*, *Īshvara's* existence is also regarded as phenomenal as He merges into absolute Godhead at the time of the great dissolution (*mahā pralaya*).

Īshvara praṇidhāna: taking refuge in God.

Is-ness: the spontaneous awareness of the Absolute Existence; basically the same as *I-ness.*

japa: the repetition of a *mantra* or name of God.

jīva: lit. "soul"; according to *Vedānta*, the reflection of the Spirit (*Ātmā*) in the individual mind, together with the mind; the doer and experiencer of the fruits of actions.

jñāna-vijñāna: perfect spiritual knowledge of the supreme Reality both in its theoretical and practical aspects.

jñānī: lit. "one who knows"; sage, wise man, knower of Truth; a seeker following the path of knowledge (*jñāna*).

kaliyuga: the fourth and final of the *yugas* (ages) which appear in cycles, characterized by increasing disorder, distress, lack of morality and spirituality, in which the world is at present.

kanthā: dress of a monk.

kṣhara: that which is subject to decay and death.

kuṇḍalini: the *shakti* (energy) which remains latent in the *mūlādhāra chakra* like a coiled snake and becomes active when roused by specific *yogic* exercises or *sādhanā.*

mahābhāva: the state of ecstacy of God's Love.

Mahāmāyā: The Divine Conscious Power of *Brahma.*

maharṣhi: great seer.

maṇipura chakra: the third of the seven *chakras*, located near the navel region. It is considered the centre of *prāṇa*, the vital force.

mantra: a sacred word, phrase, verse or sound embodying Divine Power, used for meditative practice or in rituals.

māyā: the power which delimits and distorts; delusion, ignorance.

mithyā: illusion, non-real.

mūlādhāra chakra: the first of the seven *chakras*; it is situated at the lowest extremity of the spinal column where the *kuṇḍalini* lies coiled.

mūla-bandha: a posture adopted during practice of *āsanas* and *prāṇayāma* involving the inward contraction of the generative organs and the rectum.

nāḍī: nerves; also refers to the inner energy channels of the body.

nāma japa: repetition of God's name.

nididhyāsana: meditation on one non-dualistic thought alone, to the exclusion of all other thoughts; one of the three inner disciplines of *Vedānta* as propounded by Shaṅkarāchārya.

Nirguṇa: without attributes.

nirguṇa sthiti: spiritual state implying the establishment in the silent, passive and inactive Self.

Nirvāṇa: lit. "blowing out", "extinction"; in Hinduism, it means the extinguishing of worldly desires and attachments, so that union with God or the realization of the Absolute is possible (syn. with *moksha*); in Buddhism, it also represents the condition of absolute cessation of attachment, which enables one to be delivered from the ocean of suffering.

nirvikalpa samādhi: the *samādhi* in which the distinction between the knower, the knowledge and the known vanishes absolutely.

Om: The sacred key *mantra* of Hinduism, which symbolizes all the aspects of the Divine. It is held as sacred in Buddhism, Jainsim and Sikhism as well.

Patañjali: the exponent of the *Yoga Sūtrās*; a school of Hindu philosophy.

Prakṛiti: Nature; primordial insentient material Nature composed of the three *guṇas*: *sattva*, *rajasa*, and *tamasa*; in *Sāṅkhya* philosophy, the ultimate material reality and cause of all matter and energy; in *Vedānta*, synonymous with cosmic divine manifestation or *māyā*.

prāṇa: vital force sustaining the body and responsible for all its functions. It has five principal forms: *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *samāna*, *udāna*, *vyāna*. Breath is one of the most obvious manifestations of *prāṇa*.

prāṇayāma: exercise for attaining control over *prāṇa* through regulation of breath; the fourth limb of *Patañjali's Aṣhtaṅga Yoga*.

prāṇic: belonging to the vital force.

praṇidhana: surrender to the Lord.

pūrṇa: complete, perfect.

Puruṣha: lit. "male"; in *Patañjali's Yoga* and *Sāṅkhya* philosophy, the pure, attributeless, passive Self (Spirit) or pure Consciousness, as opposed to *Prakṛiti*, which is insentient, active and composed of the three *guṇas* (attributes).

Raja Yoga: psycho-physical discipline for Self-Realization; syn. with *Patañjali's Aṣhtaṅga Yoga*.

ṛiṣhi: lit. "seer"; the *ṛiṣhis* are the ancient sages to whom the *Vedas* were revealed.

sādhaka: practitioner of a spiritual path; spiritual aspirant.

sādhanā: a general term for spiritual effort.

Saguṇa: with qualities/attributes.

sanskāra: innate tendency inherited from previous births or childhood.

sannyāsī: a renunciate; one who has taken *sannyāsa dīkṣha*, initiation into *sannyāsa.*

Satchidānanda: (Sat, Chit, Ānanda) lit. "Existence-Consciousness-Bliss"; it represents *Brahma*, the Absolute Consciousness.

satsaṅga: association with saints/sages; to talk about or sing the glories of God together in a group.

satkāra sevate: serving with reverence.

sattvic: pure; of the nature of *sattva guṇa.*

savikalpa samādhi: the samādhi in which one becomes completely unconscious of the physcical body and yet the trinity of the knower, the known and the knowing persists.

sevaka: the seeker practising selfless service in the name of God.

Shiva: God of death, one of the trinity of the Hindu pantheon — *Brahmā* (creator), *Vishṇu* (sustainer), *Shiva* (destroyer).

shūnya: zero; nothingness; pure "*Is-ness.*"

shloka: verse from the revealed scriptures in Sanskrit, or a stanza from other holy scriptures and inspired poetry.

suṣhumnā: the central and most important inner energy channel, located in the middle of the spine, through which the *kuṇdalini* arises and flows in the subtle body;

also known as *brahma nāḍi*. The opening of it through *prāṇayāma* and other mental disciplines confers upon an individual extraordinary powers and eventually the bliss of divine union.

svādhyāya: reading of the holy and revealed scriptures with faith and reverence.

tamoguṇa: the quality of inertia, ignorance, obscurity, darkness.

tāmasic: belonging to *tamoguṇa*.

tapas: asceticism; the practice of austerity which is part of the second limb of *Patañjali's Aṣhtaṅga Yoga* called *niyama*.

ṭhākura dvārā: a room in the home reserved for prayer and contemplation.

Upaniṣhad: spiritual revelations forming the most sublime part of the *Vedas*; also the basis of *Advaita Vedānta*.

uttama: the best.

vāka: verse of poetry.

vāchaka jñānī: one who has only a theological knowledge and talks too much about God but does not have the direct experience.

vairāgya: lit. "absence of attachment"; dispassion; an indispensable qualification for spiritual aspirants in all Indian spiritual paths.

Vedas: lit. "knowledge"; most ancient four Hindu scriptures — Ṛigveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda, Samaveda — believed to be divine revelations containing the whole gamut of worldly and spiritual knowledge.

Vedānta: lit. "end of the *Vedas*"; the most sublime and the last part of the *Vedas*; the sixth school of classical Hindu philosophy.

vedāntī: a follower of *Vedānta*.

vibhūti: supernatural powers obtained through austerities, spiritual practice or by the grace of God.

vyvahāra: external behaviour.

yajña: sacrificial fire.

yoga: lit. "union"; usually refers to *Patañjali's Yoga*; generally any practice or discipline for effecting union of the individual soul with the Supreme Being.

Yoga Sūtrās: system of yoga expounded by seer Patañjali comprising the philosophy of *Patañjali Yoga* (*Aṣhtaṅga Yoga*), one of the six Hindu *Darshanas*.

yogī: an adept in *yoga*; a practitioner of one of the schools of *yoga* [fem. *yoginī*].

yuga: the four periods or ages of the world's existence according to Hindu philosophy, each having its own general level of consciousness, namely *satayuga*, *tretāyuga*, *dvāparayuga* and *kaliyuga*. They follow one after the other in an unending cycle.

Pronunciation Guide

The system of transliteration adopted in this book is a little different than the one commonly used in other publications. The variation is with regard to ṛi, ch, c̣h, ṣh and sh, which are usually written as ṛ, c, ch, ṣ and ś. *Anusvāra* has been shown either by ṅ/ñ/ṇ/n/m according to the different sounds it produces rather than only by ṁ. These slight variations in diacritical marks have been adopted in order to make the transliteration simpler and more in accordance with the correct pronunciation in Sanskrit and Hindi.

Vowels

अ	**a**	as **u** in	but, **u**nder
आ	**ā**	as **a** in	f**a**r (held twice as long as **a**)
इ	**i**	as **i** in	p**i**n
ई	**ī**	as **ee** in	m**ee**t, gl**ee** (held twice as long as **i**)
उ	**u**	as **u** in	p**u**sh
ऊ	**ū**	as **oo** in	h**oo**t, b**oo**t (held twice as long as **u**)
ऋ	**ṛi**	as **ri** in	g**ri**m (considered a vowel in Sanskrit)
ॠ	**ṛī**	as **ree** in	**ree**l (considered a vowel; used rarely)
ऌ	**lri**	as **lri** in	— (considered a vowel; used rarely)
ए	**e**	as **ay** in	pl**ay**
ऐ	**ai**	as **ai** in	**ai**sle
ओ	**o**	as **o** in	h**o**me (but long)
औ	**au**	as **ow** in	c**ow**

CONSONANTS

क्	**k**	as **k** in	**k**ite
ख्	**kh**	as **ckh** in	E**ckh**art
ग्	**g**	as **g** in	**g**ive
घ्	**gh**	as **gh** in	di**g h**ard
ङ्	**ṅ**	as **n** in	si**n**g
च्	**ch**	as **ch** in	**ch**air
छ्	**ch̤**	as **ch-h** in	stau**nch-h**eart
ज्	**j**	as **j** in	**j**oy
झ्	**jh**	as **dge** in	he**dgeh**og
ञ्	**ñ**	as **n** in	lu**n**ch
ट्	**ṭ**	as **t** in	**t**ub
ठ्	**ṭh**	as **th** in	ligh**th**ouse
ड्	**ḍ**	as **d** in	**d**oor
ढ्	**ḍh**	as **dh** in	re**d-h**ot
ण्	**ṇ**	as **n** in	u**n**der (somewhat; no sound in English exactly corresponds to ण् (full letter) as in prāṇa, guṇa, praṇāma)
त्	**t**	as **t** in	French **t**
थ्	**th**	as **th** in	**th**umb
द्	**d**	as **th** in	**th**en
ध्	**dh**	as **theh** in	brea**the h**ere
न्	**n**	as **n** in	**n**ot
प्	**p**	as **p** in	**p**ine
फ्	**ph**	as **ph** in	u**p-h**ill

ब्	**b**	as **b** in	**b**ird
भ्	**bh**	as **bh** in	a**bh**or
म्	**m**	as **m** in	**m**other
य्	**y**	as **y** in	**y**ou
र्	**r**	as **r** in	**r**ain
ल्	**l**	as **l** in	**l**ong
व्	**v**	as **v** in	**v**ery
ष्	**ṣh**	as **sh** in	**sh**ine (pronounced as cerebral sibilant)
श्	**sh**	as **sh** in	**sh**rink (pronounced as palatal sibilant)
स्	**s**	as **s** in	**s**un
ह्	**h**	as **h** in	**h**ot

OTHER SYMBOLS

ं (anusvāra)

ṅ/ñ/ṇ/n/m as **n/m** in ra**n**k/lu**n**ch/u**n**der/pai**n**t/ra**m**p (The anusvāra ं in Sanskrit and Hindi sounds different in different words depending upon the consonant it precedes as shown in the above examples)

ँ (anunāsika)

ň as **n** in the French word "bo**n**" (nasal sound)

: (visarga)

ḥ pronounce **aḥ** like **aha**, **iḥ** like **ihi**, **uḥ** like **uhu**



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Original in Hindi; under publication in English.



Errata

Omission on p. 107 (line 16):

Remember, true surrender unto the Divine must make one's life pure, divine and full of dynamic *Ānanda* (Bliss). Let us learn to resign ourselves unto the Lord. May He help us and draw us closer and closer to Himself!



Review (The Mountain Path – April 1968)

Amid the welter of claims made nowadays, this little book stands out with delightful clarity. The author speaks with equal authority on theory and practice and shows both understanding and common sense, condemning alike those who make the path a mere topic for discussion and those who drive themselves unwisely and too hard. He obviously has a great deal of experience and is able to differentiate between what is to be shunned and what sought after.

Arthur Osborne

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